A STUDY OF PROSE FICTION

BLISS PERRY

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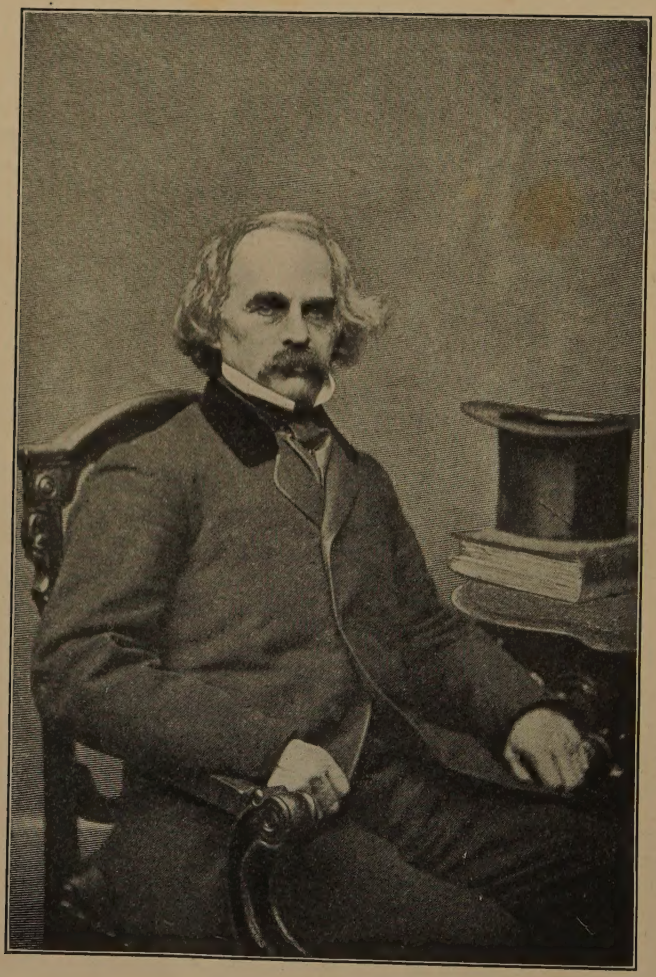

Nathaniel Hawthorne.

A STUDY OF PROSE FICTION

BY

BLISS PERRY

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To

THE PRINCETON MEN WHO USED TO LISTEN
AMIABI Y TO THESE DISCOURSES

PREFACE

THE aim of this little book is to discuss the outlines of the art of fiction. In writing it I have followed more or less closely the notes prepared, a few years ago, for a course of lectures on Prose Fiction at Princeton University. These lectures were repeated with several classes, and many teachers who have had occasion to examine the syllabus of the lectures, and the topical work assigned in connection with them, have asked me to print a book that would be adapted to effective use in the classroom. I have confidence in the general method of fiction study which is here outlined, although the kindly coöperation of my former pupils may have then given the study a certain ardor which the book will fail to impart.

It happened that the author wrote fiction, after a fashion, before attempting to lecture

upon it, and he is now conscious that the academic point of view has in turn been modified by the impressions gained during his editorship of "The Atlantic Monthly." Whether the professional examination of many thousands of manuscript stories is calculated to exalt one's standards of the art of fiction may possibly be questioned. But this editorial experience, supplementing the other methods of approach to the subject, may be thought to contribute something of practical value to the present study of the novelist's work. It is as if an enthusiast for art, after serving first as painter's apprentice and then as lecturer on painting, had been forced to act as hanging committee for an exhibition, and now, with a zeal for his subject which survives every disillusionment, were to mount a chair in the picture gallery and preach to all comers! For it is not to be denied that there is more or less sermonizing in this book. The homiletic habit lurks deep in the New Englander as in the Scotchman, and many a Yankee who can claim few other

points of resemblance to Robert Louis Stevenson is like him at least in this, that he "would rise from the dead to preach."

It should be stated distinctly that the present volume makes no attempt to trace the history of the English novel. That task has been adequately performed by several excellent handbooks, which are easily accessible. Most of my illustrations of the various aspects of the art in question are drawn, however, from English and American stories. While I have not overlooked, I trust, the work of the more significant contemporary writers, I have made no attempt to decorate these pages with references to the "novel of the year." On the contrary, wherever an allusion to the writings of masters like Scott and Thackeray and Hawthorne would serve the purpose, I have given myself the pleasure of such illustration, knowing that their books will continue to be read long after the novels of the year have faded out of memory.

It is to be hoped that this discussion of the pleasant art of story-writing will not

weigh too heavily upon the reader's conscience. If he likes, he may avoid the Appendix. But the "painful" reader, who is after all the pride of the classroom and the literary club, and who deserves one of the best seats by the family library-table, will, I hope, find in the Appendix much that will prove interesting and useful. The review questions upon Scott's "Ivanhoe" are reprinted there with the courteous permission of Messrs. Longmans, Green & Company, the publishers of my annotated edition of that novel. A portion of the opening chapter on The Study of Fiction has already appeared in print in the eleventh volume of the Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America. The chapter on The Short Story was printed in "The Atlantic" for August, 1902.

BLISS PERRY.

CAMBRIDGE, 1902.

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A STUDY OF PROSE FICTION

CHAPTER I

THE STUDY OF FICTION

"There are few ways in which people can be better employed than in reading a good novel. (I do not say that they should do nothing else.)" BENJAMIN JOWETT, *Life and Letters*.

Nature of the problems involved.

IN beginning any study, it is well to take a preliminary survey of the field, and to note the general character of the questions that are likely to arise as one advances. When the chosen field of study is one of the arts, it is obvious that the student's curiosity may be aroused by various aspects of the art under consideration. He may find himself interested primarily in the artist, or chiefly attracted by the work of art itself, or concerned with the attitude of the public which takes pleasure in that particular form of art. In the study of prose fiction, for instance, one person may

discover that his chief curiosity is about certain novelists who have been eminent practitioners in their profession. Another person may care little for the personal traits of writers of fiction, but be greatly interested in novels; and a third may find much to reward his endeavor in noting the various characteristics of the fiction-reading public. The general nature of the problems arising in the study of fiction is thus indicated, sufficiently for our present purpose, in saying that they deal with literary artists, with specific works of art, and with the public, great or small, to which the art of fiction makes a particular appeal.

The universal appetite for fiction.

It confers a certain dignity upon the study of fiction to remember how universal is the human appetite for fiction of some sort. In one of the most delightful of Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers," "On a Lazy Idle Boy" who leaned on the parapet of the old bridge at Chur, quite lost in a novel, Thackeray comments upon "the appetite for novels extending to the end of the world; far away in the frozen deep, the sailors reading them to one another during the endless night; far away under

the Syrian stars, the solemn sheikhs and elders hearkening to the poet as he recites his tales; far away in the Indian camps, where the soldiers listen to ——'s tales or ——'s, after the hot day's march; far away in little Chur yonder, where the lazy boy pores over the fond volume, and drinks it in with all his eyes; — the demand being what we know it is, the merchant must supply it, as he will supply saddles and pale ale for Bombay or Calcutta." The universality of the liking for fiction is equaled only by the variety of tastes that are gratified by fiction reading. Some of the most intellectual men have confessed their preference for the most unintellectual stories, and very ignorant and stupid people are constantly — and in a most praiseworthy fashion! — endeavoring to assimilate the lofty thought and profound emotion with which the great masterpieces of fiction are charged. Tastes are altered as we pass from youth to middle age and old age; they change with every vital experience; they grow delicate or coarse in accordance with the meat upon which they are fed. But the desire for "the story" outlasts childhood and savagery. It is a part of the spiritual hun-

ger of the most highly developed individuals and races; and it is impossible to foresee the time when fiction shall cease to be an important part of the world's literary production. "The demand being what we know it is, the merchant must supply it."

Variety of motives for fiction reading.

Not only is this desire for fiction an appetite common to humankind, but it is also to be noted that the particular motives which lead persons to read books of fiction are strangely varied. Many people like to read novels having to do with subjects in which they already have some special interest. As boys with a turn for history will easily learn to read Scott, or a scientifically minded youngster will take naturally to Jules Verne, so an adult's fondness for adventure, travel, the study of manners, for sociology, theology, or ethics will often prescribe the sort of novels he will read. There are other people who select stories that will carry them as far as possible from their ordinary pursuits and habits of thought. Fiction of this character, chosen for its power to afford distraction or even dissipation to an overwrought mind, unquestionably serves a useful purpose, though it

need scarcely be said that an exclusive reliance upon trivial and sensational stories as furnishing mental relaxation is an indication of poverty of intellectual resources. From the point of view of the boy who sells novels on the train, "a good book" is the book that most easily absorbs the attention of the traveler, and there is much to be said for the train-boy's standard of criticism. Again, many of our choices, in the selection of fiction, turn upon the more or less unconscious desire to enlarge the range of our experience. Like Pomona in "Rudder Grange," we can first wash the dishes and then follow the adventures of the English aristocracy; we can journey to the California of 1849 with Bret Harte, to a hill camp in India with Mr. Kipling, to Paris or the French provinces with Balzac. We can thus live vicariously the sort of life we might have lived if we had been differently circumstanced. We seek in novels a compensation for the dullness and monotony of actual life, or contrariwise, finding actuality too strenuous and stimulating, we take refuge in the quiet sanctuary opened to us by art. I recall a mining expert who had just come East, after a horse-

back journey of several thousand miles through the most inaccessible and dangerous mining camps of the Rocky Mountains. He wanted something to read, and his friend, a professor of chemistry, whose life was passed in his laboratory and lodgings, recommended to him a thrilling tale by Ouida, in which he himself had been reveling. But the mining expert declared the book too exciting, and settled down for a whole day's tranquil happiness with Mrs. Gaskell's "Cranford"! Smallest of all the classes of fiction readers, and yet the most thoroughly appreciative of excellence, is that group who approach a novel without any preoccupation, who ask only that it shall be a beautiful and noble work of art. Guy de Maupassant has expressed this thought in a frequently quoted passage from the preface to "Pierre et Jean." Yet it can scarcely be read too often. "The public is composed of numerous groups who say to us [novelists]: 'Console me, amuse me, — make me sad, — make me sentimental, — make me dream, — make me laugh, — make me tremble, — make me weep, — make me think.' But there are some chosen spirits who demand of the artist: 'Make for

me something *fine*, in the form which suits you best, following your own temperament.'"

Dogmatism to be avoided.

Remembering this infinite variety of motive in choosing works of fiction, it becomes easier to avoid dogmatism. It is quite impossible to draw up a list of "the best novels" for any particular person. The variations in human nature and æsthetic discipline are too great. And yet criticism has a function here which should not be overlooked. It should be able to pronounce upon the objective qualities of any book: to say what it contains, and to pass judgment upon the excellence of the form in which those contents are clothed. When we repeat the old maxim, "De gustibus non disputandum est," we should not stretch the maxim beyond the very obvious truth which it expresses. Tastes are purely subjective matters, and arguments about them, though interesting enough, are futile except as evidences of personal temperament and training. But the objects of taste, nevertheless, have certain positive qualities which may profitably be analyzed and discussed. One reader may prefer Trollope's "Framley Parsonage" to Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter,"

and another reader's preference be precisely the reverse. It may be useless to discuss these preferences, but surely criticism can pronounce upon the characteristics of the two books. It can show their radical difference in structure and style. It can point out the excellences and limitations of each of the two stories. Discussions of this sort are often illuminating and valuable; they are not to be dismissed as the expression of mere personal whim. A man may prefer chocolate to coffee as his breakfast beverage; he knows which he likes best, and it may not be worth while to dispute with him about his taste. But his physician, knowing the chemical properties of the two beverages and their relative effect upon the patient's digestive system, can probably tell him which drink is the more nourishing or stimulating for him. The physician's explanation of the positive qualities of chocolate and coffee may be compared to the judgment of a competent critic upon the constituent elements of a book. After the physician has delivered his opinion, it is still possible for his patient to say, "But I like coffee best and shall continue to drink it;" and after the critics have declared a

book to be commonplace or degrading it may be read even more than before. If the physician and the critic are blessed with a philosophical disposition they will now shrug their shoulders and murmur, "De gustibus non disputandum est." They have done their part, and further discussion is useless.

The study of fiction as related to the enjoyment of it.

We touch here upon another of the fundamental differences between fiction readers. There are lovers of all the arts who wish to keep their enjoyment of a beautiful object quite separate from an analysis of the elements that enter into that enjoyment, who prefer to be ignorant of the technical means by which the pleasurable end is secured. There are connoisseurs of music and painting who profess to be guided by their personal impressions of the sonata or the landscape piece, without reference to any knowledge of the mathematics of music or of the laws of perspective. A good deal may be said for this happy impressionistic fashion of gathering pleasure, and it has no stouter adherents than among novel readers. A very large proportion of the readers of a story take no interest whatever in the technical side of the

novelist's craft; they are interested simply in the results. They may possibly listen while Stevenson or Mr. Henry James discourses upon the difficulties and triumphs of the novelist's art, but they are chiefly concerned with the practical quest for another good story. The Anglo-Saxon, particularly, is not inclined to treat æsthetic questions with much concern. He doubts whether the serious amateur study of an art increases one's enjoyment of that art. It is precisely here that this book may part company with some readers who have cared to follow its opening pages.

For our discussion will proceed upon the tacit assumption that the study of fiction does increase one's enjoyment of it; that as the traveler who has studied architecture most carefully will get the most pleasure out of a cathedral, so the thorough student of literary art will receive most enjoyment from the masterpieces which that art has produced. Upon the practical application of this theory of the relation of technical knowledge to enjoyment, some common sense must of course be exercised. The novel which survives the test of searching

analysis, of classroom dissection, — if you like, — and gives any pleasure at the last, must be a good novel to begin with. If the doll is stuffed with sawdust, it is better not to poke into its insides. But if the novel be the work of a master — if it be "Henry Esmond" or "Adam Bede" or "Ivanhoe" — there need be no fear of lessening the student's pleasure. He will soon learn to discover the conventional tricks, the commonplace devices of the hack-writer; the books of the great writers will seem no whit less wonderful than before. Knowledge and feeling must indeed be kept in their due relations. To know is good. To feel is better, when it is a question of appropriating the form and meaning of a work of art. Analysis must be subordinated to synthesis; the details must be forgotten in the cumulative impression given by the work as a whole. Yet the synthetic, comprehensive, sympathetic view of a masterpiece of fiction is not so likely to reveal itself to the casual reader as it is to the careful student of the means by which the supreme ends of literature are attained.

Methods of fiction study.

What method of fiction study is it wisest to follow? In school and college, much will depend upon the size and proficiency of the classes, the extent to which the lecture system is adopted, the library facilities, the temperament and the training of the individual teacher. The independent student, or the member of a reading circle or club, must be governed more or less by special circumstances. And yet there are certain general modes of study between which a choice should be made at the outset.

Historical.

For instance, the English novel may be treated historically. Its origins and the main tendencies of its development are not difficult to trace. One may plan a course of fiction reading which shall follow the sequence of history. He will find excellent handbooks to guide him. The advantages of following the historical method in studying any phase of a national literature are too obvious to be denied, and yet, as far as fiction is concerned, this method is not without its drawbacks. Very few libraries contain much material of an earlier date than the middle of the eight-

eenth century, or represent more than a handful of novelists from that time to the generation of Scott. The minor fiction of any epoch is often more truly representative than the work of its greater names. But even were the material at hand, the temptation in dealing with half forgotten or wholly forgotten authors is to content one's self with secondhand opinions about them, and it is precisely this indolent fashion of passing along a received opinion which has done much to bring the study of English literature into disrepute. The reader must get the book into his hand if he is to receive much benefit from the opinion of the critic or historian. Of course every student of English fiction ought to know something of the lines of its progress in the past — say as much as the little books of Professor Raleigh[1] or Professor Cross[2] will help him to acquire — but it is doubtful whether anything more than the mastery of such a general sketch can successfully be attempted

[1] *The English Novel.* By Walter Raleigh. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894.

[2] *The Development of the English Novel.* By Wilbur L. Cross. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899.

under ordinary conditions. In the case of advanced students who have proper library facilities, the investigation of the historical development of fiction is too interesting to be likely to be neglected.

Criticism of contemporary fiction.

Again, the criticism of contemporary fiction has been found to be attractive and stimulating, both in the academic class-room and the literary club. Such a course of study traverses the immense field of latter-day fiction, and selects for analysis and judgment striking examples of this and that literary tendency. From the standpoint of pedagogy, much may be said for this method. It requires little or no special preparation on the part of the student; he may be assumed to have a certain interest in the book of the hour. It puts the teacher on a level with the class, forcing him to see more truly and to express himself more clearly than they, upon books that have not yet won a permanent place in literature, and consequently have not become the object of conventional and hackneyed criticism. Nevertheless the method has its dangers. It may tempt the teacher to popularize in the bad sense, to try to say

clever things about the novel which happens to be the latest fashion, to recognize, in making a choice among current fiction, the market valuation and thus to impress the market-value standard upon the very persons who most need to be taught the fallibility of that standard. It certainly tempts the student to criticise — that is, to perform the most delicate of mental operations — before he is in possession of any canons of criticism. It is always easy to mistake literary gossip for literary culture, and a course of reading which gives prominence to contemporary books and living authors is likely to result in a loss of true literary perspective. Good style did not begin with Stevenson, and good plots are much older than Dr. Conan Doyle.

The study of prose fiction as an art.

While every method has no doubt its own advantages and disadvantages, the method least open to objection is that which, assuming that prose fiction is an art, devotes itself to the exposition of the principles of that art. It takes for granted that there is a "body of doctrine" concerning fiction, as there is concerning painting or architecture or music,

and that the artistic principles involved are no more incapable of formulation than are the laws of the art of poetry, as expressed in treatises upon Poetics from Aristotle's day to our own. They are indeed largely the same principles, as might be expected in the case of two sister arts. A student cannot begin the study of prose fiction more profitably than by endeavoring to grasp the relations between this art and the art of narrative poetry. Quite aside from the task of tracing historically the process by which the prose romance grew out of the epic, there are rich fields for investigation in connection with such topics as the material common to the two arts, the qualities shared by the novelist and poet, and the similarity of much of their craftsmanship in the sphere of formal expression. This suggests a study of their differences in the selection of material, their varying attitude toward their material, and the diverging requirements of effective expression in the two media of prose and verse. Then the affiliations of fiction with the drama must be made clear, through a study of such questions as the general similarity in construction of the novel and the play, and

the advantages and disadvantages of substituting the novelist's indirect methods of narration and description for the direct representation of action by means of the stage. Here the student may work out, in a comparatively new territory, the familiar principle of Lessing, and assure himself that the real field of the novelist is forever separated from that of the dramatist by the nature of the artistic media which the two men employ. The student may well be asked, also, to estimate the bearing upon fiction of the modern scientific movement, remembering Lanier's remark about the novel being the meeting ground of poetry and science, and endeavoring to ascertain whether upon the whole fiction has gained or lost by its contact with the scientific spirit. After such a clearing of the ground as has been suggested, it is natural to pass to a detailed study of the content of fiction, a study, that is, of character, plot, and setting, in themselves and as interrelated. Selecting for classroom material some novels that have stood the test of time, methods of character delineation must be observed; stationary and developing characters compared; the relation of main and

subordinate characters noted. The nature of tragic and comic collisions must be analyzed; the infinitely varied ways of tangling and untangling the skein of plot reduced to some classification that can be grasped by the student. The circumstances or events enveloping the action of the story — whether it be set in some focal point of history or merely keyed to a quiet landscape — must be accurately perceived. Setting and plot and character, whether analyzed separately or grasped in their artistic relations to one another, must further be discussed in connection with the personality of the fiction-writer. Yet pupils should be taught to look for the mark of personality, not in gossip about a novelist's hour of rising and favorite breakfast and favorite books, but rather in connection with the creative processes upon which the stamp of personality is really set. The outward facts of an author's life, the traits of his character, the history of his opinions are significant to us only in so far as they have moulded his imagination. Finally, we must study the way in which differences in the nature of material and differences in personality have resulted in the

development of the varying forms of fiction. These forms are capable of infinite modification. Each writer's thoughts, dreams, convictions, must be put into words. His mastery of expression is the final element that determines his rank as an artist, and there is thus suggested to the student an endlessly curious investigation of matters of technique and style.

After some such equipment as is here briefly indicated, the student may profitably pass to the criticism of contemporary authors, if he pleases, or to some phase of the history of the novel. No one need depreciate either of those methods of study, but nevertheless the most important thing to be learned about fiction at the outset is the knowledge of what fiction normally is; a sense of what it can do and what it cannot do; a recognition of the fact that in the most insignificant short story may be seen the play of laws as old as art itself; that Aristotle and Lessing, in short, wrote with one eye on Mr. Kipling and Mr. Hardy.

Content and form in fiction.

As in the case of every other fine art, the student of prose fiction finds himself occupied with

questions concerning content and form, and their relations to each other. Back of every art product there is a conception, vaguely or definitely present in the artist's mind. Upon the character of this conception or content depends the significance of the work of art; its formal beauty depends upon the artist's skill to express his thought or feeling in the terms of the particular medium which he has chosen. Content and form are therefore most intimately related in the artist's personality. He can express nothing through the concrete medium of his particular art — whether it be a pigment or clay or a harmony of musical sounds or a succession of words — unless it has first passed through the lens of his own nature. It is always difficult, and in a certain sense unnatural, to make a sharp separation between the elements of content and of form. The artist himself rarely attempts it. He "thinks in color" or feels in terms of musical sound. The finer the work of art, the more indissolubly are the elements fused through the personality of the artist. And yet it is often of the greatest value to the student to attempt this separate analysis, — to distinguish

what has gone into the work of art from the external form in which it is clothed, — and in prose fiction form and content are more easily separable than in poetry or music or even painting.

The subject-matter of prose fiction.

No one will deny the importance of the subject-matter with which prose fiction deals. Its field is human life itself; the experience of the race, under countless conditions of existence. Fiction-writers have put into their stories a mass of observations, thoughts, and feelings concerning humankind. The significance of these records depends largely upon the sincerity, the truthfulness, of the writers. Some of them have been chiefly occupied with rendering the external truth of fact. Others, like the great romancers, have cared only for the higher truth which is revealed to and conveyed by the imagination. But however varied the scope of the fiction-writer's activity, they all have something to say about life. A chapter of first-rate fiction arrests the attention at every turn. It provokes interest, awakens curiosity, challenges comparison with one's own experience, and even while it is

energizing the imagination, concentrates it. Poetry touches us at a higher level, it is true, provided it touches us at all. Poetry is a finer art than fiction, but for that very reason there are many readers who cannot come under the domination of poetry. They have no natural ear for its music, and at twenty or twenty-two they find themselves or think themselves too old to learn the notes. The appeal of prose fiction is more universal: it captivates the man who cares mainly for facts, as well as the girl whose heart is set on fancies. Its scope is so vast, it is so varied in its different provinces, its potency to attract and to impress is so indubitable, that the reader who makes no response to it, whose powers may not be developed by means of it, must be insufferably dull. Furthermore, prose fiction is, even more than music, the great modern art. By means of it we are brought into contact with modern ideas, with the tumultuous, insistent life of the present. And this, for good or evil, is our life; the life which we must somehow live, and about which we are conscious of an unappeasable curiosity.

The question of form.

Yet the educational value of fiction consists not merely in its content, in the significance of the ideas which it conveys to the mind, but also to a considerable extent in the form in which those ideas are clothed. In the best fiction that form is singularly perfect. The study of expression as such, the cultivation of the feeling for style, is inseparably associated with a well selected course in fiction. The special treatises in narration and description, for instance, which many teachers of rhetoric are now using, draw their readiest and aptest illustrations from the novelists. The range of expression, the force and beauty with which ideas are uttered by the masters of English fiction, is unquestionable. It is hard to see how any one can come away from a close study of Thackeray or Hawthorne without a new appreciation of form, a standard of workmanship; without learning once for all that imagination and passion may coëxist with a sense of proportion, with purity of feeling, with artistic reserve. These last are what we agree to call the classic qualities. We send boys to Greek and Latin literature in the hope that they

will catch something of their secret, but if boys cannot or will not read Greek and Latin, they need not necessarily be unfamiliar with works composed in the classic spirit. In a time like ours, when everybody writes "well enough," and few try to write perfectly, it is no small thing that students may be taught through fiction to perceive the presence of style, the stamp of distinction. That sound Latinist and accomplished musician, Henry Nettleship, once wrote to a friend a passage about Wagner which is not without its bearing upon literature. "Wagner tries to make music do what it cannot do without degrading itself — namely, paint out in very loud colors certain definite feelings as they arise before the composer. The older musicians seem to me to aim rather at suggesting feeling than at actually exhibiting it, as it were, in the flesh. I think much of Wagner would vitiate my taste, *but perhaps my head is too full of the older music* to take in strains to which my nerves are not attuned." Professor Nettleship may have been right or wrong about Wagner, but is there a better service which the teacher of fiction can render a pupil, or the solitary

student of literature perform for himself, than to make his head so full of the noble cadences of Scott and Thackeray, Eliot and Hawthorne, that there shall be no room there for what has been succinctly described as "the neurotic, the erotic, and the Tommy-rotic," and all the other contemporary varieties of meretricious and ignoble art?

The novel as a field for æsthetic criticism.

No one need seek in any novel an abstract and theoretical perfection. A novel universally significant in content and impeccable in form has never been produced. Some of the most stimulating and widely influential novels have been slovenly written; and some of the most charmingly composed stories have been barren of ethical and human significance. But it is the province of æsthetic criticism, none the less, to determine the extent to which these two elements enter into the novel under discussion, to make clear, if possible, the relation of the form or content of any work of fiction to the mind of the artist who produced it. If "there is nothing in the work of art except what some man has put there," it is interesting to the critic to understand not only what intention the

man has put into his work but the form in which that conception has been expressed. To such criticism the novel presents a field no less attractive than that of the other fine arts. The æsthetic critic regards prose criticism as one species of literary art. He is primarily interested in novels, not for the useful information they may contain or the ethical guidance they may furnish, but for the æsthetic pleasure they impart. His study of fiction may lead him into history and biography, into grammar and rhetoric, perhaps into ethics and sociology, but what he is chiefly endeavoring to do is to ascertain the laws that govern the artistic expression of the phenomena of human life by means of prose narration or description, as compared with its expression through the media employed by the other arts. Assuming, as we have already said, that prose fiction is an art, he proceeds to study its principles. He tries to formulate the group of facts and laws which constitute the "body of doctrine" concerning fiction.

The value of this study.

The value of such a study lies chiefy in the pleasure it yields, the discipline it affords, to the student

himself. The vast fiction-reading public is skeptical about the very existence of standards of judgment. "It is not that there is so little taste nowadays," said some one the other day, "there is so much taste, — most of it bad." But it is the scholar's business to take the world as he finds it and to make it a trifle better if he can. The public, lawless and inconstant, craving excitement at any price, journalized daily, neither knowing nor caring what the real aim and scope of the novel ought to be, has the casting vote, after all, upon great books and little books alike. From its ultimate verdict there is no appeal. But the ultimate verdict is made up very slowly and often contradicts the judgment of the hour. Meanwhile the scholar can quietly, persistently, assert the claims of excellence. From schools and colleges, from reading circles and clubs, from isolated and unregarded rooms whose walls are lined with books, come, to serve as leaven, people who know good work from bad and who know why they know it.

CHAPTER II

PROSE FICTION AND POETRY

"A novelist is on the border-line between poetry and prose, and novels should be as it were prose saturated with poetry."

LESLIE STEPHEN, *Daniel Defoe.*

"The great modern novelist is at once scientific and poetic: and here, it seems to me, in the novel, we have the meeting, the reconciliation, the kiss, of science and poetry."

SIDNEY LANIER, *The English Novel.*

THE quotation which has just been made from Sidney Lanier will serve to indicate the theme, not only of this chapter, but of the two following ones. In tracing the various relations of prose fiction, we must take account of its affinities with poetry, and with that specialized form of poetry, the drama. But we have also to reckon with science and with the influence of the modern scientific movement upon literary art. Let us begin by noting the affiliations of prose fiction with poetry.

Relations to the lyric.

Of the three great divisions into which poetry naturally falls, namely,

dramatic, lyric, and narrative, the first has so much in common with prose fiction that their lines of relationship will need to be discussed in a separate chapter. The province of lyric poetry, on the other hand, is so distinctive that its points of contact with prose fiction can be easily defined. The lyric is, beyond any other form of poetical expression, the vehicle of personal emotion. The "lyric cry" is the spontaneous overflow of the individual passion of the poet. Its joy or pain is egoistic. It voices the poet's own heart, — no matter how many other human hearts find themselves beating in sympathy with his utterance. Now it is obvious that many novels contain lyrical passages, — that is, episodes of heightened personal feeling, transports of happiness, anguish, or exaltation, which owe their inspiration to the same causes as those which produce, in the case of a poet, lyric poetry. There are certain novels, furthermore, which represent to a peculiar degree the individual admirations and hatreds, the ardent convictions and aspirations of their authors. Passages in the Brontë novels, and whole books by George Sand, may thus fairly be called lyrical. But it is evident

enough that this highly emotionalized attitude, this intimate expression of purely personal feeling, is very far from being the normal mood of the average fiction writer.

Relations to narrative poetry.

It is in the task of the narrative or "epic" poet that we find a much closer parallel to the work of the artist in prose fiction. Both men have a story to tell, and by comparing their methods of workmanship one may learn a good deal about the limitations and relative advantages of prose and poetry as media for narration. For the narrative poet, like the novelist, finds much of his material ready to his hand, and much more, no doubt, to be "invented," — that is, selected and recombined from the mass of unrelated memories and impressions recorded in his mind. There is no better way of tracing the inevitable remoulding of narrative material by the poetic imagination than to take one of the old stories of the race and to see how poet and prose romancer have in turn dealt with it. The prose romance is unquestionably a historic development from narrative poetry. Just as the "Iliad" was formed out of hero sagas and ballads of unknown origin and antiquity, so the

Homeric poems, in turn, were broken up in early mediæval times into prose fictions like those of "Dares the Phrygian" and "Dictys the Cretan." The same process takes place with the post-classical romances of Alexander, the mediæval Arthurian romances, the stories of Charlemagne or the Cid. Verse passes over into prose; prose in turn gets versified once more. The material, for the most part, is immeasurably old; "'t is his at last who says it best." A study of these changing forms — of myth and legend as interpreted by different races and epochs and artists — throws much light upon the laws both of prose fiction and of poetry. It affects more or less directly our appreciation of contemporary literary art, for the universal sway of the mediæval prose romance — which itself sprang from a poetic imagination, and often out of actual embodiment in verse — prepared the way for the modern novel as we know it.

The common material of fiction and poetry.

Yet those who possess neither the interest nor the facilities for the comparative study of mediæval literature can observe for themselves many of the correspondences and differences between

prose fiction and poetry. Let us turn, for example, to the material common to both poet and novelist, the sources from which they take the subject-matter of their art. Novelist and poet alike are primarily interested in human life. They describe it as it seems to have manifested itself in the irrevocable past, as it exists to-day, and as it may be found in the imaginary, unknown world of the future. They are interested in all that surrounds human life and affects its myriad operations. The external world, as it is portrayed by the novelists and poets, is chiefly a setting and framework for the more complete exhibition of human characteristics. The incidents which they narrate have for their aim the portrayal of character in this or that emergency and coil of actual circumstance, or else they are as it were the mechanism — the gymnastic apparatus — by which life might test and measure itself if it pleased. Both novelist and poet, in a word, care first of all for persons. The differences of temperament and literary craftsmanship which separated Tennyson and Thackeray, for example, are relatively slight when compared with the common element of profound

curiosity with which these two writers observed men and women and reflected upon the conditions of human society. Indeed, the general distinction between men of letters, like Thackeray and Tennyson and Carlyle, and men of science, like Tyndall, Huxley, and Darwin, may be roughly indicated by saying that the former class are mainly occupied with persons, and the latter class with facts and laws.

Qualities shared by novelist and poet.

The novelist and the poet, furthermore, are alike in their habitual mental operations. Both of them must, to compass any high artistic achievement, be thinkers. They must be able to generalize from specific examples. But they are not so likely as the historian, and surely they are far less likely than the scientist, to pass from particulars to a formulation of some abstract general truth. They are more apt to reason by analogy merely, to conclude that because the real Lord Hertford did this or that, the imaginary Marquis of Steyne, some of whose traits were copied from Lord Hertford's, would do it likewise. For artistic ends, this sort of reasoning is no doubt sufficient. The scientist and philosopher

may argue that because Lord Hertford was wicked all men are wicked. Thackeray will be content to assert or imply the concrete fact of the wickedness of the Marquis of Steyne, reasoning by the light of example cast by the real British lord who served as the "original" of the imaginary one.

Dealing with unknown quantities.

But although the novelist and poet are likely to step out of their province and enter that of the philosopher and scientist in attempting to postulate general truths, it must not be imagined that they are limited to any hard-and-fast set of specific examples. Though they reason concretely rather than abstractly, they deal constantly with unknown quantities. They are forever asking themselves, and piquing the reader's curiosity by propounding to him, questions about the potential qualities of persons. How will this fictitious personage, more or less well known now to the reader, behave in these new circumstances? What will Ulysses do when he faces Penelope's suitors? Will Hamlet betray any excitement while his uncle watches the movements of the Player King? Will Rebecca yield to the Templar, and will Harry

Esmond marry Beatrice or Beatrice's mother? These are the questions — the immensely fascinating questions! — which poets and novelists propose to us. If we are sufficiently absorbed in the poem or tale, we may have our answers ready. The creator of the tale or poem is of course bound to have his answer ready too, and it will turn very largely upon his sense of the action possible to a given character under a given set of circumstances.

With potential values.

But the decision or deed of one personage affects all the others. It brings, as a painter would say, a new set of "values" into the composition, just as a shaft of sunlight, thrown into a room, alters all the color scheme of the room. Or it may be more simple to say that the potential qualities of the personages of fiction, whether in prose or in verse, may be compared to the value of the various hands of cards in the game of whist. If diamonds are to be trumps, rather than hearts or spades or clubs, the value of every card in the pack is shifted accordingly, and a corresponding scheme of play must be instantly evolved. And if, in a novel or play, "hearts are trumps," if

Hamlet believes the Ghost, or Tito Melema resolves to feign ignorance of Baldassarre, all the relationships of the persons, all the turnings of the plot, are thereby affected. The power to evoke the reader's curiosity and sympathy for such potential actions and situations is an essential element in the skill of the imaginative artist.

Both use "artistic" language.

The novelist and the poet have not only this common fund of interest in persons, and a similar fashion of making artistic use of the infinitely varied possibilities of human nature, but they are also working side by side in giving expression to their thoughts and feelings through language. Both are using what we rather indescriptively call "artistic" language, — that is, words chosen for their clearness, force, and beauty as vehicles for the communication of conceptions and emotions. Later nineteenth century fiction was particularly noticeable for the extent to which it availed itself of resources more commonly considered to belong to poetry alone. It cultivated "prose poetry," — words vaguely suggestive, instinct with emotional significance, and used in rhythmical combinations

that give much of the æsthetic quality of verse. Except in the hands of an artist like Poe, and indeed too often even with him, this use of poetic vocabulary and rhythm gives to prose fiction an over-ornamented, meretricious effect. But when a master of language desires to produce at some crisis of his story an effect comparable to the vibrant, poignant impression which poetry imparts, what does he do? While holding firmly to the cadences of prose, he chooses his words, consciously or unconsciously, from the workshop of the poet. Such wonderful lyric passages as Richard Feverel's first vision of Lucy by the river, the description of the Alps in "Beauchamp's Career," the Yarmouth storm in "David Copperfield," are examples of the intimate relationship of the language of heightened, impassioned prose to that of noble poetry.

Differences in selecting material.

The differences between the general functions of the poet and the novelist are no less suggestive. Though they may draw from a common fund of observations upon human life, the poet is forced to make a much more narrow

selection than the novelist. Since his task is the communication of emotion by means of verbal images, the poet may use only those images which affect us emotionally. Theoretically, a poem should contain nothing unpoetical, just as a piece of music should be free from discords. To assert this, however, is not to forbid the use in poetry of much material that seems at first view non-poetical, even if not actually unpoetical. The great poets, like the great musicians, are constantly surprising us by the beauty, the intensity of feeling, which can be suggested by the most unpromising material. But it is nevertheless more natural that we should be moved by the image of "a violet by a mossy stone" than by the image of a "little porringer." It is hackneyed criticism to remark that, if the poet just quoted had possessed a more unerring power of poetic choice from among the objects of common life which he celebrated in his verse, he would less often have made himself ridiculous.

The novelist has the larger liberty.

But the novelist is bound by no such necessity to avoid the trivial and commonplace. He is not always, like the poet, occupied with the imme-

diate transmission of feeling. He may devote a whole chapter to mere topography. He may chart the scene of his story, as Stevenson did before he wrote "Treasure Island," or as Blackmore made a map and sketches of the Doone country before he wrote his delightful romance. Like Balzac, he may write page after page of description of the external aspect of the house within which the human drama is to be enacted; or like Flaubert, he may spend weeks of research in order to investigate and describe the precise details of a Carthaginian banquet table. All this fidelity to fact, this careful preparation of the stage scenery, may find its justification in the added sense of reality, of verisimilitude, conveyed by the story. But whether or not always justified in actual practice, this large freedom of the novelist in the selection of material contrasts very strongly with that compulsion which the poet feels to make each line in itself a thing of beauty. The novelist, in other words, is always more likely than the poet to make a generous use, in the practice of his art, of the material furnished by his daily observation of men and things. One may imagine

the three men of letters, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Mr. Howells, walking down a street of Boston side by side. Out of the multitude of objects which would meet their eyes as possible raw material for literature, it is likely that the poet would make the most slender and scrupulous selection. The romancer would probably exercise a wider liberty of choice, and would retain in his mental notebook many facts and impressions which the poet would not find professionally useful. But the last of the three, the novelist, might conceivably make artistic use of every sight and sound and odor of the street, finding a place for it somewhere or other in his series of realistic pictures of contemporary American life.

The difference in temperament.

There is a further difference in the attitude of typical poets and novelists toward their material. The temperament of the prose writer is proverbially cooler. He does not wait to invoke the muses, nor does he ordinarily write under that "fine frenzy" which often accompanies the production of verse. The novelist, as such, when compared with the poet, is more of a quiet note-taker, a student of character

and manners and background. He is, as Henry Fielding loved to announce, "a historian of human nature." This temperamental and typical difference between the two artists, however, makes only the more noticeable those great lyric passages found here and there in the pages of masters of fiction, springing from the depths of emotion, and voiced with a nobility and beauty that we rightly associate with the poets alone. We may well believe that in the composition of such passages other novelists besides George Eliot have written under the overpowering impression which she described to Mr. Cross: —

"She told me that in all that she considered her best writing there was a 'not herself' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting." CROSS, *Life of George Eliot.*

Verse and prose as differing media.

The similarity already noticed between the tasks of the poet and the novelist, in that they both give expression through language to quickened moods of feeling, must not cause us to overlook the different requirements of expression in the two media of verse and prose. The

poet, thinking as he does in images, is bound to use figurative language; thrilling as he must be with emotion, that language naturally falls into rhythm; his instinct for ordered beauty often leads him to the choice of rhyme; and the nature of his imagination compels him to the use of those words and cadences whose very sound, through some occult and unanalyzable associations and by obscure imitative and suggestive potencies, stir the deep, if vague, vibrations of the soul. In these effects the writer of prose fiction may, as we have seen, share to a certain extent. In proportion as his emotion rises in intensity, his language will tend not only to become tropical, but, like the language of the impassioned orator, it will tend to fall into periods of more or less regularly recurrent stress. Yet this rhythmical effect, often to be noted in powerful passages of prose fiction, is very different from metrical effect; and whenever — as notoriously in some of the pathetic paragraphs of Dickens and the animal stories of Mr. Seton-Thompson — the rhythm becomes the regular iambic beat of English blank verse, the writer's intention overreaches and defeats itself. With rhyme

the prose writer has of course nothing to do. Upon words of vague emotional connotation he sometimes does depend, in rendering certain actions of nature or moods of men, but, as we have already seen, "prose poetry" is at best dubious ground. Most novelists fare better when, like Molière's enlightened hero, they speak prose, and know that they are speaking it.

The æsthetic values of prose.

It is not to be denied that the poet's use of metre, rhyme, and tone color will always give him technical resources beyond those of the prose writer. He has all the instruments that the prose writer possesses, and more besides, if one excepts the peculiar cadences, the distinctive melody and harmony that belong exclusively to prose. It needs a very fine ear to perceive these as yet unanalyzed æsthetic values of "loosened speech," — the qualities that make a sentence of prose give pleasure through its sound alone. It may be that we shall some day understand this better. Future rhetoricians and metricists may be able to point out the tone values, the intricate and unrepeated harmonies of a page of Daudet, precisely as we now endeavor to analyze the expressional

values of a page of Racine. It is quite possible that they may assert that the prose writer was the rarer artist. But at present nothing is to be gained, and much has evidently been lost, by confusing the territories of prose and verse, and producing, under the name of "prose poetry" and the "poetic short story," a mass of nondescript gelatinous rhetoric which can be classified as neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring.

Another method of approach.

There is still another way of approaching the subject of the relations of prose fiction to poetry. It is perhaps even more interesting than those considered hitherto, although, like them, its value consists rather in clarifying one's general perception of the variances in literary forms than in furnishing exact critical formulas. The method of approach is this: to select writers who have been both novelists and poets; to study the different sides of their natures that have been expressed through the two arts; and by this means to get light upon the character of the arts themselves. It is not difficult to see that George Eliot, for instance, betrayed through

the medium of such verse as "Jubal" and "How Lisa loved the King" a yearning, romantic vein of emotion which could find no such natural channel of expression in her realistic novels. Thackeray's verse seems at times to be an even more direct outpouring of his own kindly, melancholy self than is to be found in his fiction, in spite of the obvious fact that in his stories he is forever coming upon the stage himself to explain and comment upon his characters. The two Walter Scotts, the poet and the novelist, were quite different persons. The novelist was not merely the poet grown older, grown tired of competing with Byron for the public favor; he was a greater, saner, wiser man, in closer touch with the enduring realities of human nature. But he had lost something, too. The rival arts of verse and prose were fitted to be the medium of the slowly changing outlook upon life which is to be observed in passing from the younger to the elder Walter Scott, and no one can feel this without a new insight into the essential nature of verse and prose as tools for the literary artist.

The novel as "a criticism of life."

There is a very familiar phrase of Matthew Arnold which applies to the modern novel even more aptly than to poetry. "Poetry," said that great critic and admirable poet, "is a criticism of life." This remark has often indeed been understood in too narrow a sense. Arnold meant by criticism an interpretation, an appreciation of human life upon its ideal side, such an interpretation as Wordsworth or Dante or Goethe gives us. But the power to do this through the medium of verse is rare, and it has often happened that poets like Arnold, like his master Sainte-Beuve, like our own Mr. Howells, have gradually ceased to compose verse, and have turned their attention more and more to prose criticism. It is true that criticism as produced by such men is in itself literature; it may possess qualities of high and permanent worth. But such critics as these would probably be the first to admit that, compared with poetry of equally high relative position in its class, criticism is a second best. However stimulating it may be to the intelligence, however fortifying and tonic to the will, the natural instincts of the heart teach that poetry is somehow per-

forming a higher office than prose criticism. It deals on the whole with nobler aspects of things, and deals with them in a nobler way. The same is true of the rivalry between the novelist and the poet. Both may be seers, but the novelist is compelled by the very terms of his art to say what he sees, while the poet sings it. And the singer is above the sayer. Whether one is comparing the differing gifts of a single writer like Victor Hugo, who wrought such marvels in both the arts — "Victor in Drama, Victor in Romance" — or comparing the typical poet with the typical novelist, or studying the history of those prose romances and poems which are a part of the intellectual heritage of the race, it becomes clear that poetry is the finer art. Yet the greatest triumphs of prose fiction have been won by those books in which the interpretation of life, the creative imagination, and the mastery of language have been akin to those revealed by enduring poetry. Hence it is that the student of prose fiction should constantly observe, not the romancer alone, but also the aims and methods of the poet and the dramatist.

CHAPTER III

FICTION AND THE DRAMA

"It may fairly be claimed that humanity has, within the past hundred years, found a way of carrying a theatre in its pocket; and so long as humanity remains what it is, it will delight in taking out its pocket-stage and watching the antics of the actors, who are so like itself and yet so much more interesting. Perhaps that is, after all, the best answer to the question, 'What is a novel?' It is, or ought to be, a pocket-stage."

F. MARION CRAWFORD, *The Novel: What It Is.*

The terms "novel" and "drama" as here used.

WE have already noted some of the general relations between prose fiction and poetry, and have remarked that one of the chief poetic types, the drama, has such intimate affiliations with the novel as to deserve treatment in a special chapter. In commenting upon the similarities and differences of function that characterize these two literary forms, it will be more simple to use the term "novel" in a wide sense, as including the romance and short story, and the term "drama" as indicating plays written both in prose and in verse, but always as compositions intended

for actual stage representation. The "closet drama" — the play that is not intended to be played — is an isolated though a very interesting literary species which does not fall within the range of the present chapter.

The object of both novel and drama: characters in action.

Using the "novel," then, as synonymous with narrative prose fiction, and the "drama" as meaning the acted play, we may begin by observing that both novel and drama have for their object the exhibition of characters in action. How far a given personality can be made to reveal itself through visible action and audible words upon the stage must in each individual instance be decided by the dramatist. Mere physical "business" upon the boards, exits and entrances, crossing from left to right and back again, may not afford that kind of dramatic "action" which makes manifest the essential character of a stage personage. On the other hand, Hamlet's irresolution, his failure to act, is in itself a positive dramatic force; it may be reckoned upon like any other. The element of external action is indeed less necessary to the novel, because the author can describe mental attitudes instead of visu-

alizing them for the eye of the spectator. He can sometimes rouse our intense curiosity and eagerness by the mere depiction of a psychological state, as Walter Pater has done in the case of Sebastian Storck and other personages of his "Imaginary Portraits." The fact that "nothing happens" in stories of this kind may be precisely what most interests us, because we are made to understand what it is that inhibits action. But the great majority of novels and plays represent human life in nothing more faithfully than in their insistence upon deeds. It is through action — tangible, visible action upon the stage, or, in the novel, action suggested by the medium of words — that the characters of the play and the novel are ordinarily revealed. In proportion as high art is attained in either medium of expression this action is marked by adequacy of motive, by conformity to the character, by progression and unity.

Similarities in construction.

What is more, there are marked similarities in the general construction — the architecture, so to say — of the two literary forms which we are considering. Suppose we take up the sepa-

rate portions of the drama, those "parts" and "moments" of its technical structure which have interested students of dramatic literature from the time of the Greek rhetoricians to our own. Each one of these various functions, performed by a definite portion of the play, has its parallel in the architectonics of prose fiction.

The exposition.

In both play and novel, for instance, it is the first task of the author to explain the characters and circumstances which are essential to an understanding of the plot. Upon his skill in so presenting his personages and their surroundings that they may be intelligently understood at the outset depends a large measure of his success. The first act of a play is thus spoken of as the act containing the "exposition." Like the overture of a musical composition, it indicates the nature of the whole. Now the opening chapters of a novel, or the first lines of a short story, have a precisely similar function to perform. It is true that in the novel the exposition may be far more deliberate. The play-wright has not a moment to lose after the curtain has once risen; every moment of opening action

counts heavily for or against his chances of interesting the audience in the personages of the play. But Walter Scott and Thackeray and Dickens ramble along in chapter after chapter of pleasant prologues without appreciably advancing towards the real story which they have to tell, — so confident were these authors, no doubt, of their power to secure the attention of their readers, and so unerringly, in general, did they utilize all their apparently trivial descriptive and narrative details in instinctively forecasting the final cumulative effect of the tale.

Accurate presentation of detail.

These details are not only more deliberately presented in the novel than would be possible in the play, but they are also more accurately presented. There is less for us to guess at. The novelist, in spite of all the suppressions which his art makes necessary, tells us more, and leaves us less often to our own inferences, than the play-wright. When the story-writer describes his heroine, we doubtless see her less distinctly than if the dramatist had sent her down the stage for our inspection, but whereas the dramatist is forced to let us infer what is in her mind by her appearance,

her facial expression, gestures, words, and the attitude of other personages respecting her, the novelist can tell us precisely and at once what she is thinking about and what she is likely to do. But whatever may be the differences in technique, both novelist and dramatist are bent first of all upon introducing their characters.

The "exciting" force or "moment."

Then comes, commonly in the middle or towards the end of the first act of the play, and not far from the beginning of a well constructed tale, what is called the "exciting (or "inciting") force" or "moment." Something happens, and even though this happening may be apparently insignificant, it begins to affect the entire course of the plot. The Ghost appears to Hamlet; the witches confront Macbeth; Cassius talks with Brutus; the clash of interest begins; the lines of party or of faction, of individual ambition or resolve, are suddenly apparent. In the tale this "moment" — the little weight that turns the scale — is frequently quite undramatic and unimpressive, but it can usually be pointed out. In "Pendennis" it is where the major receives the letter from his

sister which tells about Arthur's infatuation for Miss Fotheringay. In "The House of the Seven Gables" it is the opening of the shop after all the years of dust and silence. In a romance of adventure, like Stevenson's "Kidnapped," it is the orphan boy leaving home at early dawn to seek his fortune up and down the world.

The development.

No sooner are the currents of action fairly flowing, both in play and in novel, than their speed and power perceptibly increase. Throughout the second, and into the third act of a five-act play, we witness what Freytag called the "heightening;" that is, not merely quickened movement, but more passionate feeling, a closer contact of personal forces, a more violent collision of wills, a greater complication of the various threads of the plot, the entanglement of a greater number of personages in the intrigue or the achievement upon which the play is based. In the novel this development is not necessarily, as upon the stage, accompanied and indicated by a more rapid and emphasized external action. It may proceed through the slow growth of character alone, and only its silently accumulated re-

sults be in due time manifest. Dorothea Casaubon in "Middlemarch" and Tess in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" pass through such periods of almost unregarded preparation, of gradual ripening for the great crises of their lives. Thus chapters describing Dorothea's life after her marriage and Tess's sojourn in Froom Vale belong to the "development" of the story, but are unexciting enough in themselves. But the best novel, surely, like the best play, is that in which inner character and outward action are developed simultaneously; in which the growth of mind and heart and will are expressed through tangible and striking scenes. In this respect "Vanity Fair" and "A Tale of Two Cities" and "Adam Bede" and "Pan Michael" — to choose stories of very different types — accomplish what Shakespeare accomplished in "Macbeth." They allow us to watch the growth or the decay of a soul even while we are fascinated by a spectacle.

The climax.

Near the middle of the typical play — commonly in the third act of a five-act drama — is what is variously called the "highest point," the "turning

point," the "climax," or the "grand climax." It is the scene where the dramatic forces which are contending for the mastery are most evenly balanced. One cannot say whether the hero or the intriguer, the protagonist or the antagonist, will conquer. It is the point of greatest tension between the opposing powers. It is watched by the spectators with something of the feeling with which one sees a sky-rocket turn in its upward flight and begin its fall. This momentary equilibrium between the "rising" and the "falling" action of the play may not necessarily call forth the greatest excitement from spectators. That may be reserved for the catastrophe, which may be compared to the bursting of the sky-rocket as it nears the end of its downward flight. And yet the great climax scenes in Shakespeare, for instance, are stamped indelibly upon the memory: Macbeth at the banquet; Lear in the hut; Cæsar at the senate house; Hamlet watching the play within the play.

The "tragic moment."

In a tragedy the grand climax is usually immediately preceded or followed by what is called the "tragic moment," — the event which makes a tragic

outcome unavoidable and foredooms to failure every subsequent struggle of the hero against his fate. The speech of Mark Antony, the killing of Polonius, the escape of Fleance, are examples of the "tragic moment," and it will be seen how closely this is associated with what the Greeks named the "turn," — the beginning of the "falling action."

Climax in the novel.

It is not often that a novel presents such striking examples of skillfully constructed climax. In the Spanish-born picaresque romance, — so named because its hero is a *pícaro*, a rogue, — and in the modern romance of adventure, all that is usually attempted is to invent a brisk succession of incidents and situations, designed to capture the attention of the reader by any device, rather than to conform rigidly to those technical conventions upon which the success of the play-wright is constantly dependent. In the novel of manners or the novel of character, instead of a "grand climax" there is likely to be a series of less noticeable scenes which reveal or determine the personality of the men and women involved. There could scarcely be a better illustration of the

difference in method, as between the drama and the novel, than that scene in George Eliot's "Middlemarch" where Lydgate, at the meeting of the directors of the hospital, is forced to declare his vote for either Farebrother or Tyke. It is a scene of thrilling psychological interest. A human soul is hanging in the balance; but the situation is wholly lacking in dramatic impressiveness, judged from the point of view of the playwright. Yet in "Vanity Fair" the chapter which describes how Rawdon Crawley knocked down the Marquis of Steyne is very obviously the "grand climax" of the book. It marks the "highest point" in Becky's worldly fortunes, and her detection by her husband is the "turn" with which begins the long episode of her losing fight with society. In the stage version of "Vanity Fair" it is equally interesting to note the climactic quality of this scene. But it may be said in general that the novel has a far greater freedom of method than the play, as regards the use either of a grand climax or of a series of climaxes. So entirely lacking in dramaturgic possibilities is the plot of many a story that the climax is identified with the conclusion, and

one reads on with the simple desire to learn "how it comes out," rather than to watch — as upon the stage — the struggle of the embodied forces upon which the outcome depends.

The "fall."

We have already implied that the "highest point" or "climax" of a typical drama marks the division of the two processes out of which the plot of a play is made. These processes are frequently described as the "complication" — the weaving together of the various threads of interest — and the "resolution" — the untangling of the threads again. "Tying" and "untying" are still simpler terms; and the French word for untying, the *dénoûment*, has grown familiar to us, though it is often used for what is technically known as the "catastrophe," rather than as descriptive of the entire "falling action," of which the catastrophe is only the final stage. Freytag was one of the first to point out that, in planning the "fall" of a tragic drama, the play-wright manages to maintain the interest of the spectators by striking scenic effects, by passages of intense psychological interest, like Juliet's monologue, or Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking

scene, or by making the hero struggle superbly against the "counterplayers." If the play be a comedy, he interposes new obstacles in the path of the lovers, or he removes these only to bring to view obstacles more formidable still.

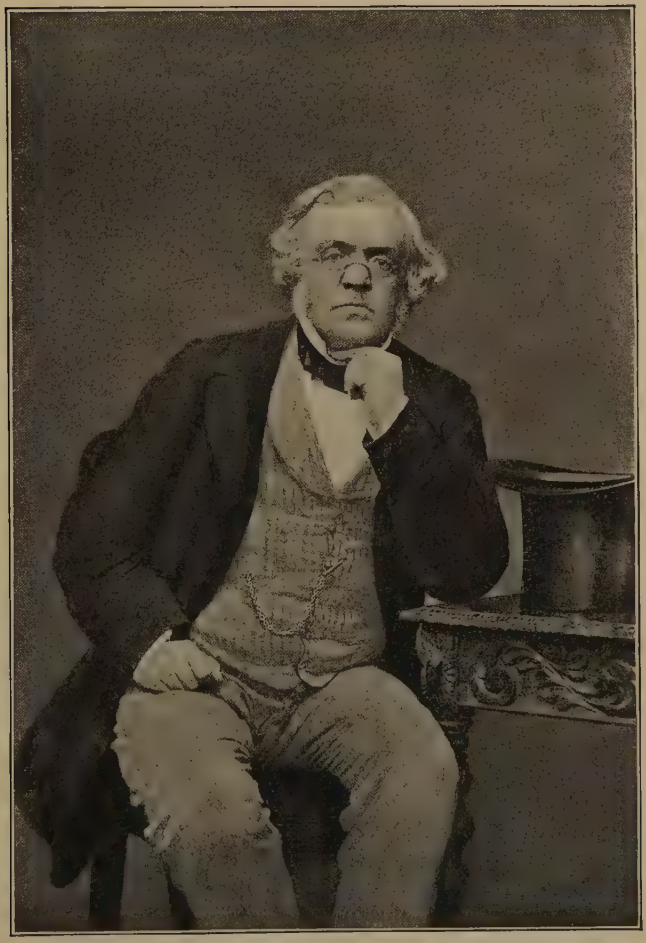
The "final suspense."

Both in comedy and in tragedy there is the "moment of final suspense," when the sinister or happy fortune presaged by the general nature of the "falling action" seems contradicted, or at least held in suspense, by some unforeseen occurrence, like Macbeth's triumphal announcement of the prophecy that he was not to be slain by any man born of woman, or the news that comes to Richard Third that the fleet of his rival, Richmond, has been destroyed by a storm.[1]

The catastrophe.

And then comes swiftly the catastrophe, — the inexorable doom of tragedy, the "Bless you, my children!" of conventional comedy, — the final allotment of fortune to the personages of the play. It must always seem reasonable, must appear to be of "the nature of things." However

[1] These illustrations are drawn from Freytag's *Technique of the Drama.*



W. M. Thackeray

much one may grieve over the pity and terror of it, it must be recognized as essentially, though perhaps mysteriously, just. The visible catastrophe, like the death of Othello or of Hamlet, is the outward symbol of what has already taken place within the soul. It embodies for sense-perception, as all art must, the dramatist's thought; it sets the seal of unity upon his completed work.

The dénoûment in fiction.

What parallel does prose fiction offer to the dramatist's handling of the "resolution," the "untying," of his plot? In the so-called "plot novel" the parallel is very close indeed. The first half of a detective story often occupies itself with knotting as firmly as possible the threads of the mystery; the second half is devoted to a skillful untangling. When the hero or heroine of fiction has once made a fatal choice, the "fall" proceeds along precisely the same lines as in the drama. The drama has been defined as made up of impulse, deed, and consequence, and in depicting the "consequence" the novelist can adjust outward action to inward struggle as finely as the dramatist. Indeed the tragic degeneration of such a character as Tito Melema in

"Romola" can be expressed more sensitively by the methods of narration and description than by the relatively coarser effects necessary for visible representation upon the stage. Novels as far apart in their aims and methods of workmanship as Kingsley's "Hereward" and Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Eleanor" have in common this admirable adjustment of inner mood to outward event. In psychological romances like Hawthorne's "Marble Faun" and "Scarlet Letter," the dénoûment takes place in the heart and mind of the characters; the author is so concerned with this, his immediate purpose, that he frequently becomes indifferent to the interests of external action. When Hawthorne's publishers insisted upon his writing an additional chapter to the "Marble Faun," in order to tell what became of the various personages of the story, he good-naturedly complied; but it is evident that his task was perfunctory. Indeed it may be said that in proportion as the purely psychological interest predominates in a story it becomes less necessary to arrange the external catastrophe with an eye to dramatic effect. The great creators of character in fiction have the art of making

us believe in the real existence of the men and women they portray. They throw a vivid light upon the few links of the endless chain of human existence and activity; and though the story stops we have an irresistible impression that the men and women are continuing to live. Their personality so dominates the imagination that we refuse to think of them as merely pigeon-holed in some of the final-chapter categories, such as "happily married" or "dead." They are alive forevermore to the sympathetic imagination.

The dénoûment in romance.

Rather curiously, the romance of mere adventure, like "The Three Musketeers," often treats the dénoûment with singular unconcern. What interests us here is not so much the characters as the adventures which beset them upon the road, and when all the journeyings are ended it makes little difference in what room of the inn the personages find rest. It is the more normal type of fiction, where both character-interest and the interest of outward action are intimately joined, that affords in its dénoûments the closest parallels to the dénoûments of the conventional drama. It is closer to the realities of life than either the

romance of pure psychology or the romance of pure adventure, for it conceives of the human mind and heart, not as something apart from external deeds, nor again of deeds as something intrinsically interesting, but rather of soul and deed together, inextricably joined.

The novel and the play as modes of reaching the public.

We have seen that the novel affords to the artist an opportunity to communicate, by means of narration and description, certain images which the dramatist can present in tangible, visible form. But the indirect method of presentation, by means of narration and description, is perfectly fitted to the gifts and circumstances of certain writers. Charlotte Brontë's ignorance of the world of action would probably have made it impossible for her to turn play-wright, but, apart from some obvious faults of unreality, it scarcely affected her achievement as a novelist. Authors with a far wider experience of life, like Cooper or Hawthorne, would have found their ignorance of the technique of the stage a formidable obstacle to communicating with the public through that medium.

Many writers, furthermore, shrink from the associations of the stage. Although there is far more pecuniary profit to the author from a successful play than from the average successful novel, and although in some countries, notably in France, the authorship of a play brings more instant personal recognition, play-writing demands a long and arduous period of apprenticeship. Even after years of familiarity with technical stagecraft, it is far more difficult to get a manuscript play accepted than it is to secure publication for a manuscript novel. Most authors choose, or are forced to follow, the easier path. If they really have something to say, they have the satisfaction of knowing that their novels bring them into touch with a more varied public than that which patronizes the theatre. The novel reaches thousands of isolated persons, as well as a community of pleasure seekers. Then, too, it calls forth, at least in its more powerful examples, a more sustained, uninterrupted emotional activity than is afforded by a play. Dramatic representations last but three or four hours at most; a great novel frequently dominates, possesses, the imagination of the reader for

many days. Not that the play is forgotten, but the book, after all, seems to come into a more enduring, permanent relation with its reader.

Advantages of the novel as a medium.

Besides these general and perhaps too theoretical differences between the novelist's and the dramatist's modes of addressing their public, there are certain definite and indisputable advantages which the novelist possesses. One is the power to convey mental phenomena with exactness. Although the dramatist, by the simple expedient of raising a curtain, can make us see the heroine as she sits in her chair, and cause us to apprehend her physical characteristics more clearly than any writer could convey them to us, the novelist has a great advantage when he wants to tell us what is passing in the heroine's mind. He is not forced, like the dramatist, to make us infer what she is thinking about; he is not left to the mercy of the actress's interpretation of his lines; he tells us precisely what the heroine thinks and feels. Furthermore, as the chapter on Setting will show, the novelist has it in his power to convey the effect of many natural phenomena, as for

instance the sea, far more perfectly through words, than any stage carpenter and scene painter and expert with electric lights can possibly contrive to do. But the greatest advantage of the novelist, no doubt, lies in his liberty to introduce material which is not strictly concerned, as every line of the dramatist's should be, with the exhibition of characters in action. He has some measure of the poet's "unchartered freedom" to depict beautiful objects, unconcerned with their immediate bearing upon the problem in hand. He is by turns scientist, sociologist, explorer, and historian, conveying all sorts of information about the world we live in, in its infinite varieties of aspect and appeal. In his own comment upon the personages and action of his story, he usurps the function of the ancient chorus, and turns philosopher. He may forget his story, for the time being, in these wise or profound or playful "asides" to his readers. Yet though the laws of purely objective art, both in drama and in prose fiction, would deny him this privilege, "he will still be prating," and in this very weakness — as artistic theory would judge it — of novelists like George Eliot and Thack-

eray, we discover one of the chief sources of their actual power over the reader.

Compensating advantages of the stage.

On the other hand, it may rightly be claimed for stage representation that it compasses certain results that are out of the reach of narrative fiction. Perhaps the most obvious of these advantages is the assistance which stage setting affords to the imagination of the spectator. Many readers lack the power of visualizing the imaginary scenes depicted by the novelist, and hence they rarely or never feel themselves in the presence of real persons or surrounded by real circumstances. But the modern play-wright is so varied in resource, so fertile in mechanical expedients, that he can create a stage setting of extraordinary verisimilitude to the conditions demanded by the particular play. A feeble, untrained, unpictorial imagination thus finds itself assisted in every scene. It is true that too much help may often be given. The rude sign-posts, "Athens" or "Rome," hung out upon the stage of the Elizabethan theatre, as the sole indication of a shift of scene, doubtless forced the audience to a free, playful exercise of fancy which put them in accord

with the dramatist's mood. They met him half-way, and agreeing like children to play a game with conventional symbols, entered into it perhaps all the more heartily upon that account, just as imaginary sugar lumps, at a "make-believe" tea-party, often give more pleasure than real ones. There is little doubt that the over-elaborate stage setting of the present day sometimes dulls the imagination by giving it no exercise. But the theatrical audience is a strangely composite one, and the pictorial imagination of many spectators needs all the help that can be given to it. In the realistic setting that represents a hotel office, a steamboat landing, a telephone exchange, or a department store, there is an appeal to the spectator's knowledge and sympathy, a gratification of his sense of recognition, which yield notable satisfaction. The pleasure afforded by the lavish mounting of many romantic plays is of a higher type æsthetically. It is more useful, too, in stimulating the imagination of many spectators who would not and could not respond to the detailed descriptions drawn by the novelist. In this assistance that it gives to the imagination of the tired

or uncultivated spectator the theatre bases one of its most unquestioned claims to the support of the public.

Individual moments.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that the play-wright is able to emphasize individual moments of action with a vividness and force quite beyond the reach of the novelist. The often-quoted remark about the acting of Edmund Kean, that it was like "reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning," contains a truth applicable to many varieties of dramatic art. Play-wright and actor have it in their power to stamp a single scene, line, attitude, ineffaceably upon the memory. The "curse of Rome" in "Richelieu," Mercutio's "a plague on both your houses," Lady Macbeth's talking in her sleep, all represent legitimate dramatic effects which for intensity, direct and immediate penetrating power, are beyond the scope of the novelist.

The dramatization of novels.

It is easy to multiply these illustrations of the differences in method which separate the art of the novelist from that of the dramatist. A more practical and instructive way of comparing the technique of the two arts, however, is to study the dramatization of novels.

It may well be doubted whether the recent popularity of such dramatizations has been beneficial either to the stage or to the novel, but it is easy for any student to draw useful comparisons between the two modes of presenting characters in action. Let him read "Vanity Fair," "The Scarlet Letter," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "The Little Minister," "The Prisoner of Zenda," "The Christian," or "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and watch, carefully and repeatedly, the plays that have been constructed from these stories. He will learn, better than any abstract analysis can possibly teach him, the inexorable conditions under which the play-wright is obliged to work, and the inevitable modifications which the play-wright is forced to make in the material supplied for him by the novelist. The chief lesson to be learned is this: that the novel and the play are not merely two different modes of communicating the same fact or truth. It is rather that the different modes result in the communication of a different fact. It is impossible that Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" should be presented upon the stage. Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" is a complex of personal impressions and convictions about life, trans-

mitted to us by a specific art of which Thackeray was a master. A dramatized "Vanity Fair" can no more transmit those impressions than a novelized "Hamlet" can give us Shakespeare's "Hamlet." The field of the dramatist, in a word, is marked off from that of the novelist by the nature of the artistic medium which each man employs. Which medium is better depends wholly upon the personality and the training of the artist, and the nature of the fact or truth he wishes to convey to the public. It is enough for our present purposes to remark that the two media differ as completely as bronze and pigment, or marble and musical tone, and that the success of any artist depends largely upon his instinctive or acquired sense of the possibilities or limitations of the material he chooses. As for the dramatization of novels, it should never be forgotten that a novel is typically as far removed from a play as a bird is from a fish; and that any attempt to transform one into the other is apt to result in a sort of flying-fish, a betwixt-and-between thing, — capable, indeed, of both swimming and flying, but good at neither.

CHAPTER IV

FICTION AND SCIENCE

"To ascertain and communicate facts is the object of science; to quicken our life into a higher consciousness through the feelings is the function of art. But though knowing and feeling are not identical, and a fact expressed in terms of feeling affects us as other than the same fact expressed in terms of knowing, yet our emotions rest on and are controlled by our knowledge. Whatever modifies our intellectual conceptions powerfully, in due time affects art powerfully." DOWDEN, *Studies in Literature.*

Man as material for the scientist.

BOTH the scientist and the artist are constantly dealing with man, and yet there is a striking contrast between the characteristic ways in which the scientist and the artist confront their human material. The scientist's interest in the human organism begins long before the dawn of conscious life in the individual. He studies the laws of heredity, the influence of race, family, and climate, as they affect the physical and mental characteristics of the new human being. He follows the child's bodily growth and intellectual development with the keenest scrutiny, finding here the key to many

puzzling problems relating to the past history and the future welfare of the race. As the child matures into manhood or womanhood, every physical characteristic or social relation of the individual becomes the object of the scientist's closest study. Experts in ethics and economics, in sociology, law, government, in short in all the departments of social and political science, make man the object of their investigations and theories. Furthermore, all the sciences dealing primarily with things — such as chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology — find their incentive and their ultimate justification in the assistance they give to man in his ceaseless effort to understand himself and his place in the universe. In a word, the aim of the scientist is to know man as he is, in all his relations.

Man as material for the artist.

But how different is the function of the artist! When he turns to the human being in search of material for his art, his chief endeavor is to make something beautiful. With this purpose the sculptor represents, with more or less fidelity to actual fact, the outlines of the human form. The painter depicts the light reflected from the human face and figure.

The poet translates the emotions of men and women into conventional forms of beautifully ordered speech. The musician embodies man's inarticulate desires, his vaguest dreams, in harmonies of sound. All these artistic activities imply knowledge of men and women; but it is obvious that knowledge is not with the artist, as it is with the scientist, an end in itself. It is only one element in his chief task. That task is to create some beautiful object. It is necessary to keep this fundamental distinction clearly in mind in endeavoring to estimate the nature and extent of the influence of the modern scientific movement upon the art of fiction.

Fiction as affected by physical science.

It will be readily recognized that fiction, like every other department of human activity, has not escaped the impact of that widespread and deep interest in physical science which was one of the most marked characteristics of the nineteenth century. The influence of this movement may be traced in almost every field of literature. The constant reference in Tennyson's later poetry to the doctrine of evolution, and the application of the theory of heredity in the problem-plays of Ibsen,

illustrate the scientific cast of modern literature quite as effectively as George Eliot's masterly studies in environment, or the scientific romances of M. Jules Verne or Mr. H. G. Wells. But it has happened more frequently in fiction than in other departments of literary art that the writer has set himself deliberately to the work of scientific or pseudo-scientific demonstration, while availing himself ostensibly of the conventional devices which are a part of the novelist's stock in trade. The most famous, and upon the whole the most influential, example of fidelity to a method supposedly scientific has been that of M. Zola. In his well known essay entitled "Le Roman Expérimental," [1] he has explained and defended the methods which he has endeavored to follow in composing the novels of the Rougon-Macquart series. The thesis of the essay can be summed up in a few sentences.

"Le Roman Expérimental."

M. Zola begins by pointing out the difference between a science of observation, like astronomy, and a science based upon experiments, like chem-

[1] There is an English translation by B. M. Sherman. London and New York: Cassell, 1893.

istry. The observer, he says, is only the photographer of phenomena ; but the experimenter can alter the conditions, and, subjecting phenomena to these new conditions, can prove or disprove some hypothesis. In similar fashion a novelist can "experiment" upon a character, and study its behavior under the particular conditions to which the novelist chooses to subject it. Chemistry and physics have now become exact sciences. Physiology and psychology are likewise subject to fixed laws, since the "same determinism governs the stone in the road and the brain of man." It is therefore the duty of the novelist to apply the methods of the exact sciences to the intellectual and emotional activities of mankind, and to replace the romances of pure imagination by those of observation and experiment. Idealistic writers have had quite too much to say about the unknown, about mysterious forces which elude analysis. A writer ought to base his work upon positive knowledge, upon the territory already conquered by science, and it is only when he reaches the end of this territory, and is confronted with the unknown, that he is free to exercise his intuition, his

a priori ideals. Metaphysics must give place to physiology. "No doubt," says M. Zola in closing, "the wrath of Achilles and the love of Dido will remain eternally beautiful portraitures; but it is our duty to analyze wrath and love, and to see precisely how these passions perform their function in the human organism. Ours is a new point of view; it becomes experimental rather than philosophical. In a word, the experimental method, in literature as in science, is in process of determining those natural phenomena, individual and social, of which metaphysics has given hitherto only irrational and supernatural explanations."

The weakness in M. Zola's argument.

Such, in brief outline, is the argument of one of the most interesting and famous essays ever devoted to the art of fiction. The weak points in Zola's presentation of his case have been indicated by M. Brunetière and many other French critics. Passing over entirely Zola's assumption of a "determinism" governing all phenomena, — an assumption upon which his whole argument rests, and which would find even fewer adherents among men of science to-day than it did

twenty years ago, — there are at least two fatal defects in his logic. The first is that in his use of the term "experiment" to describe the novelist's procedure towards his characters, Zola is juggling with words. No novelist can possibly conduct an "experiment" with persons as a chemist does with acids, or a physiologist with foods. The novelist is either an "observer" pure and simple — as far as his nature will allow — or else he performs a purely imaginary "experiment" in placing his personages in various supposititious situations and telling us how they conduct themselves. In other words, we have to accept the novelist's statement of the behavior of certain selected persons, in circumstances imagined by the novelist himself. The "experiment," described with such solemnity, is a pure bit of "make-believe."

"A priori ideas."

And secondly, M. Zola, who is a slashing and resourceful debater rather than a shrewd one, practically gives away his case when he admits that in the presence of the "unknown" there is an opportunity for one's "a priori ideas," for "intuition," for the play of the artist's personality. Zola and his opponents differ of

course as to the extent of the rôle which the unknown plays in fiction; but to admit its presence at all is a serious halt in the triumphal march of his theory. What is still more unfortunate for him, — since literary theories are bound to depend, at last, upon literary practice, — in M. Zola's own novels there is a more astounding exhibition of "a priori ideas," of a *parti pris*, of deliberate ignoring of some facts and imaginative distortion of other facts, than in any other romancer of his time. His "scientific" principle, when carried into practice by himself, stands revealed as grossly unscientific.

The effects of scientific theory.

Whatever M. Zola's personal success as a debater or practitioner in the field of fiction, there is no question as to the reality of the influence of the scientific temper upon the novelist's art. "True it is that modern scientific study is inductive, is experimental, is based upon comparison of experiences. And true it is that the modern scientific method has laid a heavy hand of compulsion upon the modern literary worker." [1] This compulsion has varied in degree at dif-

[1] F. H. Stoddard, *The Evolution of the English Novel*, p. 212. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900.

ferent periods, but it may be traced in the English novel ever since the seventeenth century. "The works of the lesser writers of the seventeenth century show the rise of a new spirit, foreign to the times of Shakespeare, — a spirit of observation, of attention to detail, of stress laid upon matter of fact, of bold analysis of feelings and free argument upon institutions; the microscope of the men of the Restoration, as it were, laying bare the details of daily objects, and superseding the telescope of the Elizabethans that brought the heavens nearer earth. No one word will finally describe it. In its relation to knowledge it is the spirit of science; to literature it is the spirit of criticism; and science and criticism in England are the creations of the seventeenth century."[1] The same tendency is to be observed in the fiction of the Continent, where it dominated some of the most influential novels between 1870 and the close of the nineteenth century. Although few novelists would now advocate it in the extreme and doctrinaire form assumed for argumentative purposes by

[1] Walter Raleigh, *The English Novel*, p. 111. New York: Scribner's.

M. Zola, it must everywhere be reckoned with.

What fiction has gained by it.

It is not to be questioned that fiction has gained, in more than one positive quality, from this saturation with the spirit that has entered so completely into the consciousness of modern society.

In range of interest.

For one thing, it has wonderfully broadened the range of the subject-matter of fiction. Science has taught us the significance of all facts. A thousand aspects of life and nature, which lay wholly outside the field of vision of the post-classical or mediæval romance, are full of interest and suggestiveness to the modern novel-writer. The moment that the writer and his reader share this conviction of the potential significance of objects or aspects of life hitherto regarded as trivial or meaningless, that moment the scope of possible subjects has broadened almost endlessly. To compare the field within which a mediæval romancer works professionally with the field open to Balzac, Zola, or Tolstoi, is to compare the number of objects visible to the naked eye with those visible to the observer possessed of a microscope.

Within this vastly widened field of possible material the individual details have been wrought out with a scrupulous and indeed microscopic care. The exactness of observation which has everywhere resulted from the cultivation of the physical sciences has changed the very texture of the modern novel. Dialect stories furnish a convenient illustration. No novelist would now care to put into the mouths of negro characters the unheard-of sounds that passed for negro dialect in the generation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Many writers of provincial dialect have given the most detailed and painstaking effort to the study of phonetics. Compare the rustic dialect of Thomas Hardy's characters, for instance, with that spoken by Fielding's rustics. The difference is due to a century's progress in recording impressions with scientific precision.

In accuracy of detail.

Instantaneous photography has trained the eye of artist and public alike. To take the most familiar example, photography has taught us that a running horse never extends all four legs at once, in the way in which artists have

A new way of seeing things.

been wont to represent him. As soon as the photograph has unerringly demonstrated what is the actual position of the horse's legs, the eye begins to analyze and readjust its impressions in accordance with the newly discovered fact. Frederic Remington's horses, drawn after the revelations of instantaneous photography, seem real to our generation; the galloping horses in old pictures of British hunting fields seem strangely unreal. It is thus that science has taught us accurate and analytic vision, and the training has been instantly reflected in every form of art. Whether a heightened beauty has always resulted from this new treatment is to be doubted. The æsthetic questions involved are subtle and far-reaching. But the chief point now to be noted is that our generation has been taught to use its eyes in a new way. The illustrated papers, for example, show us, with the absolute fidelity of the camera, the precise image of an athlete breasting the tape at the end of a hundred-yard sprint. Whether his face and form are as beautiful as we imagined, and whether the artist is justified in representing him as he appears to the trained rather than to the untrained observer, are

questions in which we have for the present no concern. We have simply to note and remember the fact that artists and the public are learning a new way of seeing things; that in exactness of observation, in analytic power, and in the power to generalize from specific examples, the art of fiction has learned a great deal from science.

Particular sciences: physiology.

Since fiction deals primarily with man, the sciences that have particularly affected the art of fiction are physiology and psychology. An undoubted advantage has come to the novelist through the wider popular knowledge of the physical man. The conscious realization of the dignity and beauty of the human body, reflected from so many departments of modern literature, has been nowhere more apparent than in fiction. The glorification of "muscular Christianity" in the novels of Charles Kingsley is a typical example. The praise of bodily strength and endurance, the frank pride in virility and courage, have scarcely been depicted more superbly by Walt Whitman himself than by the story-writers of our time. The respect for the body, the value set upon physical training and outdoor

sports, rests back very largely upon what science has taught us regarding the importance of these things. "The value and significance of flesh," which other poets besides Browning and Rossetti have endeavored to make clear, may be portrayed mystically, after the manner of poets, or realistically and in a manner more suited to prose; but in either case the science of physiology reinforces it, and affirms its claims to recognition.

Psychology.

The progress of the science of psychology has unquestionably taught many novelists a better understanding of mental processes. Recent literature is full of examples of the transference of psychological theory to the pages of fiction, and though, as we shall notice shortly, this has not always resulted in a gain for fiction, it has given to the work of some writers a firmness and precision of analysis and phrase which would otherwise be impossible. One need not go to George Eliot and Mrs. Humphry Ward for examples. The admirable stories of Edith Wharton are essentially psychological both in theme and in workmanship. In passing from Professor William James's essays on psychology to Mr. Henry James's

later studies in fiction, one is scarcely conscious of a change in the writer's attitude, though in clearness and workmanlike English the advantage frequently lies with the real critic of Mrs. Piper rather than with the creator of the imaginary Maud-Evelyn. Both pieces of work are studies in the psychology of spiritualism. The investigator has passed along to the fiction writer an almost endless list of possible material for stories, — material which never could have been utilized if it had not been for the professional labor of the psychologist.

Science as harming fiction: confusion between science and art.

Although the influence of the scientific movement has resulted in these obvious gains, both as to the scope and as to the technical methods of fiction, it is also possible to point out very serious disadvantages. The chief of these is the confusion of the distinction between science and art. The late W. J. Stillman, an accomplished critic and observer, wrote two papers on "The Decay of Art" and "The Revival of Art," [1] in which he argued with bitter force that the

[1] Reprinted in *The Old Rome and the New and other Essays*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898.

spirit of exact inquiry, the fidelity to nature and to fact, are proving fatal to true artistic production. "The shadow of science is the eclipse of art. . . . Photography is the absolute negation of art. . . . The nearer to nature, the farther from art." Such are some of the characteristic sentences in his brilliant attack upon that naturalistic temper which just now is to be met on every hand. Mr. Stillman believed that the glorification of the natural sciences leads inevitably to the extinction of the perception of the beautiful, that it antagonizes the development of æsthetic feeling on the part of the public. Nature should be the servant, not the master. The "fundamental law is that in its sphere art is supreme, and nature only its bricks and mortar. So long as we confound fidelity to nature with excellence in art, we ignore that law." Many careful students of contemporary literature will, I believe, recognize the validity of Mr. Stillman's criticism. The immemorial heresy that art consists in imitation of nature has received strong support from a generation immensely interested in the facts of nature.

Belittling of the imagination.

But the greater the interest felt by artist and public in the facts, in "the human documents," the narrower is the sphere accorded to the imagination. If a careful study of a certain new field is a sufficient equipment for a novelist, why may not any patient observer turn out a masterpiece? Mr. Henry James's excellent advice to the young author, "You can never take too many notes," has been understood in so literal a sense that note-taking seems the end of the whole matter. "I have seventeen hundred pages of notes," M. Zola is reported to have said before the appearance of his novel "Lourdes." "My book is finished; all that I have to do is to write it." But books made after such a fashion usually afford ample warning of the danger of crushing the imagination under the sheer mass and weight of fact. If the human imagination cannot freely master its material, and remould fact in accordance with the demands of the higher, the spiritual truth, then the facts may prove worse than useless. It is well that the bee should bear honey to the hive, but if it tries to carry too much honey, it cannot use its wings.

Materialistic tendencies.

There are other special disadvantages which have resulted from the scientific depiction of physical fact. There has been, in much of the fiction produced under the immediate influence of the scientific spirit, a materialistic tendency. We have already noticed the philosophy of determinism that underlies the argument of M. Zola's famous essay. In his novels, as M. Brunetière and other critics have not failed to point out, there is constant evidence of the stress laid upon sensations rather than upon emotions, upon the body rather than upon the mind. This preoccupation with the concerns of the body has frequently resulted in grossness. Fiction has spread before us detailed descriptions of the human organism influenced by alcoholism, by opium, by many nameless forms of degeneracy and decay, and the tendency has been too often not merely towards grossness, but towards positively evil suggestion. Upon this point it is sufficient to quote the words of one of the most learned writers on æsthetic theory, Bernard Bosanquet: "The three anti-æsthetic tendencies of art, the scientific, the

moralistic, and the impure, are constantly found in union."[1]

A mechanical psychology.

Turning from the depiction of physical facts to the analysis of psychological processes, one may assert that the extreme impulse given, in certain schools of modern fiction, to the scrutiny of mental states has resulted in a mechanical psychology. The men and women of these stories are mere puppets. The authors simply pull the wires, and the puppets dance as if galvanized into a ghastly semblance of life. The fondness for morbid states of mind has kept pace with the unnatural interest in morbid conditions of the body. Professor Josiah Royce wrote not many years ago an extremely acute study of the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," entitled "The Case of John Bunyan." How many stories of Balzac or even of Hawthorne might be called "The Case of Mr. ——!" The real difficulty arises in the temptation of the artist to assume that air of scientific impartiality which in reality is nothing other than unsympathetic. From being neutral, dispassionate, impartial, how easy to become pitiless or contemptuous!

[1] Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 446.

Nor would it be difficult to point out that in the excessive development of the psychological point of view, there is a tendency toward over-cleverness which has robbed the art of fiction of its simplicity and naturalness. There are many pages in George Meredith and in Henry James acute beyond belief, subtle to the point of exciting our wondering admiration, and yet certainly oversubtle, perverse, and in the end pointless and ineffective. It is true enough that fiction, like poetry, may normally undertake to criticise life, but this criticism must not be refined to the point of being refined away. How often it fails to move either the reader's interest or his sympathy! It transports us into the laboratory, the dissecting room, the study, but it fails to give us the image of palpitating, radiant life.

Has fiction gained or lost?

On the whole it is difficult to strike a general balance and say whether fiction has gained or lost by contact with science. The gains and losses seem to me at least to be rather evenly balanced. We are too close as yet to the body of fiction produced since 1870 to be aware of all its implications and indirect con-

sequences. But there are few students of the history of fiction who will be inclined to regret that the scientific experiment has been so thoroughly tried. That experiment was sure to come. Unquestionably it has impaired the power and limited the imagination of many a writer in our own time. But it has also taught some great lessons by which our novelists of the future may profit if they will. These lessons are unmistakable, and they go to the very root of the philosophy of artistic creation. In fiction, more clearly than in any other field of modern literature, may be traced the impact of the scientific method upon the creative imagination. And these lessons will remain, however wide may be the sway of the present reaction against the scientific method, however sudden the recoil into the field of mere adventure and romance. It should not be forgotten, also, that the developments of the last thirty years, the present reaction against them, and whatever new influences the future may have in store, are powerless to affect the great fiction produced in bygone generations under the impulse of other forces. One can always go back to Sir Walter if he will.

CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTERS

"Nothing that Turgenieff had to say could be more interesting than his talk about his own work, his manner of writing. What I have heard him tell of these things was worthy of the beautiful results he produced; of the deep purpose, pervading them all, to show us life itself. The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot — that was the last thing he thought of: it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stood before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible of their nature. The first thing was to make clear to himself what he did know, to begin with; and to this end, he wrote out a sort of biography of each of his characters, and everything that they had done and that had happened to them up to the opening of the story. He had their *dossier*, as the French say, and as the police has of that of every conspicuous criminal. With this material in his hand he was able to proceed; the story all lay in the question, What shall I make them do? He always made them do things that showed them completely; but, as he said, the defect of his manner and the reproach that was made him was his want of 'architecture,' — in other words, of composition. The great thing, of course, is to have architecture as well as precious material, as Walter Scott had them, as Balzac had them." HENRY JAMES, *Partial Portraits.*

The novelist's materials.

WITH this chapter we reach a new phase of the discussion. We

have hitherto been studying the nature of prose fiction, and its relation to other forms of literature as well as to the general scientific movement of the time. We have now to consider the materials which the novelist uses. The present chapter and the two following ones will be devoted to the essential elements, the raw material, as it were, of the story-writer's handicraft. We must then trace in later chapters the modification of this material due to the nature of the individual novelist and to those literary conventions and traditions which he shares in common with his generation.

Characters, plot, and setting.

We are accustomed to say of any work of fiction that it contains three elements of potential interest, namely, the characters, the plot, and the setting or background. In other words, a story-teller shows how certain persons do certain things under certain circumstances, and according to his purpose or the nature of his particular book he emphasizes one or the other or possibly all three of these elements that are calculated to excite and satisfy the curiosity of the reader.

The characters alone.

Let us take, then, the first of these three elements and note the various methods in which story-writers have dealt with their characters. Where do they find them? How do they manage to make the characters clear to the readers of the book? These questions must be answered before we attempt to trace the relation of the characters to the plot, or the relation of both characters and plot to those enveloping circumstances and events which for convenience we have agreed to call the setting of the story.

The novelist's observation.

First, then, from what sources does the novelist draw his characters? Either he observes them directly in the actual world, or hears or reads about them and thus appropriates the experience of other persons, or, finally, he may imagine his characters. As far as direct observation of character is concerned, it is obvious that any man's experience with various types or specimens of human character is necessarily limited, although the difference between various novelists in this regard must be singularly great. If one compares the variety of human types that fell under the eye of Field-

ing with the types with which Richardson was personally acquainted, the advantage would certainly lie on Fielding's side. Sir Walter Scott would certainly be at a disadvantage as compared with Mr. Kipling. Yet these illustrations will suggest the fact that a wide acquaintance with the different forms of human nature is by no means essential to the highest achievement in character-drawing. Novelists like Hawthorne and Charlotte Brontë, with the very narrowest experience and personal acquaintance, have often been able to observe and portray personal characteristics in a fashion that puts the ordinary globe-trotter to shame. The commercial traveler's superficial acquaintance with many men and many cities, affording as it does countless opportunities for the observation of varied traits of human character and action, may not after all be so valuable an equipment for story-writing as the limited and sustained and profound observation of some country minister who has watched men and women from the cradle to the grave.

Indirect knowledge.

But a great deal of the material of the novelist comes to him from what he hears in his conversation with others

or reads in books. The latter source of information is of course of peculiar value to those story-writers who have occupied themselves primarily with history. Dr. Conan Doyle has remarked that before he wrote "The White Company" he read three hundred books dealing with the fourteenth century, and the number of volumes read by George Eliot in preparation for writing "Romola" and "Daniel Deronda" is said to have been far greater than this.

"Invention" and imagination.

Yet it is clear that few novelists of high rank ever transfer directly to their pages the material which has reached them at second-hand through conversation or through books. Nor is it so common as we suppose to transfer directly to the pages of the story the material furnished by the writer's own observation. In proportion as he is a genuine artist his imagination plays an increasing rôle in remoulding memories of objects or persons. We may be sure that the novelist usually, if not always, desires something a trifle different from what he has actually seen or read. The basis of his character-drawing will always rest to a certain extent upon self-knowledge, upon his power

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to place himself in the imaginary person's situation and to determine the acts of the imaginary person by what the author fancies that he himself would do under those circumstances. The limitations in the range of character-drawing are not all to be found, therefore, in the necessarily restricted spheres of direct observation and second-hand knowledge. A man's comprehension of the possibilities of human nature is also limited by his knowledge of his own nature.

The writer's attitude towards his characters.

With these different types of character in his mind, ready to be portrayed, what is the attitude of the writer towards his characters? Sometimes he seems to gaze upward at them in frank admiration of their beauty and virtue. Scott's attitude towards his young lady heroines, as has been frequently pointed out, is one of undisguised worship. And many another romantic novelist has allowed himself to drop on his knees and fold his hands and look up at his heroines until he quite forgets to draw them. Conversely, there are abundant examples in French fiction — the work of Flaubert and Maupassant affording constant instances — of the author's looking

down upon his characters in an attitude not merely of detachment but of apparent hostility. Flaubert regards the struggles of his most famous heroine much as a biologist studies the nerve reactions of some insect pinned to his table for the purposes of experiment.

Friendly interpretation.

There is, however, a happier mean between these two extremes; namely, when the author seems to stand on a level with his characters, looking them frankly in the eyes, reading each weakness clear, but studying them as it were with the level gaze of friendship. Every novelist has his favorite characters; that is, personages whom he draws with exceptional sympathy and fullness of detail, into whose mouths he may put his own sentiments, whose hearts seem to throb in unison with his own. Very often the novelist betrays in this way his unconscious sympathies. M. Brunetière many years ago, in a brilliant essay entitled "Le personnage sympatique dans la Littérature,"[1] claimed that Shakespeare's Falstaff and Hamlet were examples of this kind of unconscious revelation of the more profound and

[1] *Revue des deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1882.

instinctive traits of the writer himself. It is likewise easy to believe, to take an even more familiar example, that Milton was unaware of the fact that he was making Satan the hero of "Paradise Lost."

Moral sympathy is necessary if the work in question is to exhibit any moral perspective. The artist's delineation should, of course, be impartial, and it is better, in the great majority of cases certainly, that his sympathy should be implicitly rather than explicitly expressed. But the sympathy should be there. The writer of great fiction not only recognizes the difference between good and evil, but he does not allow himself to speak of good and evil in the same tones. To quote Tolstoi on Maupassant, — Moral sympathy.

"I remember a celebrated painter once showing me a picture of his which represented a religious procession. It was wonderfully painted, but there was no indication of the artist's relation to his subject.

"'Well. now, do you consider these ceremonies to be good, and that one ought to take part in them or no?' I inquired.

"The artist, with a show of condescension to my simplicity, explained that he knew nothing about that, and thought he had no need to know. His business was to depict life.

"'But, any way, you sympathize with all this?'

"'I cannot say so.'

"'Well, do you dislike these ceremonies?'

"'Neither the one or the other,' replied this modern, highly educated artist, with a smile of compassion at my stupidity. He represented life, without understanding its meaning, and unmoved by its aspect to love or dislike. So it was, one regrets to say, with Maupassant."

Methods of delineating character: direct portrayal.

With this material for character-drawing ready to his hand, and with these conscious and unconscious sympathies and antipathies to guide him in his work, how are his characters to be delineated? It is usual in commenting upon the task of the play-wright to make a distinction between direct and indirect methods of character portrayal. The same distinction holds good in fiction. The novelist must often content himself with exhibiting without comment, except so far as the requisite physical description is concerned, the personal appearance of his characters. He narrates their actions, reports their words, or by one of the immemorial conventions of the story-teller's craft, he tells us what is lurking in their thoughts.

But this direct delineation is by no means so frequent as that kind of character-drawing which is accompanied with some sort of comment designed to interpret and enforce some of the features of the story. Sometimes the author himself, as so frequently in the novels of Thackeray and George Eliot, takes the stage and explains or moralizes upon the behavior of his personages. Very often there are characters or groups of characters performing something of the function of the ancient Greek chorus in interpreting to the reader the bearing, the moral results, of the act which is taking place. It frequently happens that this character is the "sympathetic personage" whom M. Brunetière has described; that is, the character in deepest accord with the fundamental nature of the author himself. But it by no means happens that this interpreting personage is invariably the leading character of the story. More often it is one of the minor characters who from time to time by indirect comment reveals to the reader the essential nature of all that is happening.

The author's comment.

What is called in the case of the play-wright indirect delineation of

Indirect delineation.

character has also its correspondence in fiction. "I am no longer beautiful," said a famous French woman; "the sweepers no longer turn to look when I cross the street!" Something of the same effect is secured in the chapters of a story as upon the stage, by describing not the hero and the heroine, but the effect produced by them upon the other personages. Some of the most masterly touches in the closing chapters of "Vanity Fair" are devoted to the portrayal of the social and moral position of Rebecca Sharp, but Thackeray does not venture upon this directly. He simply shows how she is treated by the inhabitants of the little town of Pumpernickel. In the stage version of "Vanity Fair" these scenes are brought sharply home to the consciousness of many spectators who probably missed the point of Thackeray's delicate insinuations in the text of the story. The more subtle, the more psychological the particular work of fiction happens to be, the greater become the possibilities of this indirect method of character-delineation. Hawthorne's most effective descriptions of Judge Pyncheon in "The House of the Seven Gables" are not the passages where he de-

scribes the judge directly, extraordinarily vivid as these are; they are rather in those paragraphs where the effects produced by Judge Pyncheon's personality upon the transparent nature of Phœbe are made clear to the reader.

Characters as delineated.

The illustration just used suggests a new distinction which we must draw; namely, the difference between the characters as delineated. Let us imagine that the personages of the story, whether drawn directly or indirectly, whether presented with or without comment, now stand before us. Let us suppose ourselves to look at them as quietly and completely as we should observe actors upon the stage. What is the most obvious difference between these people whom the novelist has drawn for us?

Simple and complex.

One obvious distinction is that between simple and complex characters. Phœbe, in "The House of the Seven Gables," is a deliciously simple character, a nature of such flawless purity that it seems possible to comprehend her at a glance. She belongs to Goethe's Gretchen type, the sort of girl he loved, in his plays, to place in dramatic contrast with accomplished women

of the world. Sir Walter Scott's fighting men are similar examples of perfectly simple characters. One understands them at a glance, and however much one loves or hates them upon deeper acquaintance, they never confuse or delude the reader. A single fibre makes up the texture of their natures.

Dominant traits.

But far more commonly the personages in the novel are complex. Very often they have one trait which predominates over their others, — as selfishness is the dominant motive in Becky Sharp, and love for her husband the dominant motive of Fielding's Amelia. Sometimes it is difficult to say of these complex characters what the strongest element in their natures will prove to be. In "The Marble Faun" much of the fascination of Miriam's character, especially when thrown into contrast with Hilda's, turns upon the extremely complex traits out of which the character is woven. The same is true of Gwendolen in "Daniel Deronda," as compared with Dinah Morris in "Adam Bede."

Stationary and developing characters.

Another distinction which plays a constantly increasing rôle in modern fiction is that between the stationary and the developing characters. Cer-

tain personages, and these not the least interesting and congenial to the reader, remain, like Horatio in the play, constant quantities to the last. The vicissitudes of the action do not affect them. One is conscious that whatever happens they will remain to the end precisely what they were in the beginning, harmonious, evenly balanced characters, from whose natures the waves of worldly circumstance and trial are thrown back spent and baffled. In the novel of adventure, and particularly in those of the picaresque type, there is little attempt at any portrayal of character development. The pawn, the bishop, the knight, remain to the end of the game the same as in the beginning. Mere pieces on a chess board, they do not change their nature with the progress of the story. It is generally true of the minor characters in the fiction of the present day that the closing chapters reveal them exactly as they were in the beginning. They are like trees upon the bank of a river, by means of which one may measure the swiftness of the stream itself. But the main characters of the story may be likened without exaggeration to the river itself, constantly altering its course, accelerat-

ing or retarding its current, and never quite the same from one moment to another. This development of personality in the characters of the novelist is one of the most subtle and powerful modes of affecting the sympathy and interest of the reader. Let us note some of the ways in which this development is accomplished.

Struggle: conscious and unconscious.

In fiction, as in life, growth is usually the result of struggle. But the struggle may be conscious or unconscious, and may end in victory or in defeat. There is something very fine about the wholly unconscious fashion in which Scott's characters perform their rôle in the human comedy. There is little self-examination, no morbid analysis of motives. Most of his finest personages are of the true Horatio breed. They behave as if the particular things they do were the only things possible for them to do and they were not to trouble themselves about either the acts or their consequences. The same is true of many of the most attractive personages of Dickens, Kingsley, and George Meredith.

Struggle ending in victory or defeat.

George Eliot's novels, on the other hand, are full of examples of

conscious moral struggle. The men and women whom she depicts most fully are constantly analyzing their motives or struggling forward towards some goal. In the cases of Adam Bede and Daniel Deronda the conscious moral efforts are successful. These characters accomplish the aim which they have established for themselves. The same may be said for Henry Esmond, and for Lord Kew in "The Newcomes." Few of Thackeray's characters torture themselves in self-analysis, in conscious moral questioning, and yet the struggles of Esmond and of Lord Kew are no less real on that account and no less representative of human nature.

Deterioration.

Some of the most famous examples of character-drawing in modern fiction represent, however, not moral victory but defeat. To watch a character deteriorate, no matter how strongly it battles against adversity of circumstance or inherent weakness of nature, imparts to fiction the tragedy of actual life. Lydgate in "Middlemarch" is a familiar example of this deterioration; so is Anna Karenina in Tolstoi's novel, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles in the novel by Thomas Hardy. Both Thackeray

and George Eliot have given us masterly examples of character gradually deteriorating without any real effort to lift itself above the stream of circumstance. Tito Melema in "Romola" and Lord Mohun in "Henry Esmond," like Bartley Hubbard in Mr. Howells's "Modern Instance," steadily drift from bad to worse, and their downward progress is indicated with a precision, a truth, and a moral observation which make a profound impression upon the reader.

Development under special influences.

Very often, however, the characters of fiction are portrayed to us as developing not so much under the stress of conflict, but under the influence of such forces as prosperity, as in "John Halifax, Gentleman," or adversity, as in "Silas Lapham" and "Silas Marner." Or we watch the character alter as it approaches old age, as with Colonel Newcome, or submit to the force of a stronger personality, as in "Richard Feverel." We see it acting under the influence of religious impulse, as with Dinah Morris and David Grieve. We are asked to study the effect upon it of some theory of art or philosophy, as in Pater's "Imaginary Portraits" and Voltaire's "Can-

dide." In all these ways it will be observed that the author of fiction has endeavored to hold the mirror up to nature, to make his book reflect something of the actuality of moral experience which is the condition of the growth or the retrogression in the lives of real men or women.

Characteristic traits.

However real the fictitious personality may seem to the writer, he must depend upon certain artistic devices for making the characteristic traits of his personage seem real to the reader. It was the custom of Scott to devote a page or two of personal description to each character at the time of its first introduction into the story. After this preliminary description of the personal appearance and costume of the character, Scott seemed to trouble his head no more about the matter. The personage was supposed to be portrayed once for all, and to be visualized by the reader in the terms of that presentation. It is more common, however, to find these characterizing details, whether of outward appearance or of inner nature, presented gradually to the reader. Sometimes the characteristic trait in fiction corresponds closely to the " gag " upon the stage,

that is, a trick of speech or action obviously used to identify the character. We grow familiar in "Romola" with Tessa's "baby face." Mr. Brooke in "Middlemarch" is forever saying, "I went into that a good deal at one time." In "David Copperfield" Barkis is always "willin'." These repeated idiosyncrasies of talk, or face, or dress, or manner undoubtedly help to accentuate the individuality of the character, but if too exclusive reliance is placed upon them it is easy to turn them, whether in a book or upon the stage, into caricatures.

Professional traits.

It is extremely interesting to notice the delicate and sure touches with which masters of imaginative fiction have portrayed the characteristics of the various professions and occupations. In the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales," for instance, one never wearies of admiring the simplicity of the soldier, the awkwardness of the sailor on horseback, the lawyer who seemed busier than he was, the doctor who had studied but little of the Bible, the merchant whose talk was of money-making.

Class traits.

Class characteristics are also interesting to observe. In an Eng-

lish or Continental novel one is constantly called upon to take account of certain recognized class distinctions, upon which many of the relations of the characters are instantly seen to turn. "A *bourgeois* interior" has a distinct connotation in a French or German novel; but to describe a similar American interior the word *bourgeois* would not suffice. The cash basis of classification of American society, — so far as it prevails, — while it frequently piques or rewards the professional interest of the literary artist, requires far more labor on his part than if he were to describe the upper, the middle, or the lower classes, removed from one another by the almost impassable barrier fixed by centuries of social tradition.

Representatives of certain rôles.

It is also interesting to note that individuals in fiction frequently take on certain typical traits due to the particular rôle which the individual is to play in the story. The débutante, the dowager, the "woman thirty years old," the "woman misunderstood," have a distinct function in certain stories, and this function affects more or less directly the behavior of the individuals who have been cast for that

particular rôle. The same is true of the persons who represent moral failures and triumphs. The drunkard, the gambler, the miser, the philanthropist, have, as types, certain easily recognized traits, and these typical characteristics are not to be left out of account in studying the character-drawing of the persons to whom these traits belong. The same is true of those personages to whom are assigned definite rôles in the plot of the story. The villain, the lover, the intriguer, the heroine, are parts suggesting definite lines of character-drawing, and it is impossible to construct an individual character in fiction without regard to the conventional requirements of the rôle which the person is asked to play.

National and sectional traits.

Furthermore, there are typical national traits which are always to be noted in addition to those lines of difference which we have just discussed. The Italian, the Frenchman, the Englishman, when introduced into a novel, must show to a greater or less extent the typical behavior of the Italian, the Frenchman, or the Englishman. In depicting national characteristics, sectional traits, too, play an important

part. In introducing an American into a story few novelists are willing to satisfy themselves by representing such a "typical American" as is presented upon the Paris or London stage. The novelist with a fine sense of precision in character-drawing would certainly wish to note those characteristics that distinguish the Southerner from the Northerner, the Hoosier from the Californian or the Texan. Even within the boundaries of a single section, as the history of New England fiction so abundantly illustrates, there is an immense variety of different types.

The individual and the type.

It becomes essential, therefore, that we should distinguish closely between the individual and the type. What is really meant by these two words? And which should the artist aim to delineate? We say in actual life that men like Samuel Johnson or Abraham Lincoln possess individuality, — that is, that they have certain sharply defined personal characteristics which readily and absolutely separate them from all other individuals in the world. In fiction, persons like Becky Sharp and Colonel Newcome have precisely this same

individual characterization, and cannot for a moment be confused with other persons in other stories. As compared with these examples of individuals what do we mean by a type? The dictionaries suggest two lines of definition, both of which are of use to the student of fiction. According to the first, type means an *ideal representation* of a species or group, combining its essential characteristics. It is this sense of the word which dictionary makers have in mind in describing the type as the ideal hovering before the artist. But in the terms of another definition, type also means an *example* of a species or group combining its essential characteristics. When, therefore, we speak of types in fiction we sometimes mean that a person is portrayed as embodying more or less perfectly certain ideals which exist in the mind of the artist, and we also mean very frequently that the typical person is simply an excellent example of a well known species or group.

The type in natural history.

We shall find a convenient illustration in natural history. I remember hearing a famous naturalist say that the crow is a typical bird, —

that is, that, compared with the woodpecker, the hawk, the crane, the crow represents the normal form of the bird family. Naturalists speak, indeed, of the type genus, the type species, and the type specimen, meaning thereby a division that is especially characteristic of the larger group which it represents. And our distinction in fiction between the individual and the type would perhaps be more fully illustrated by the use of the terms "genus," "species," and "specimen." Genus, let us say, *corvus;* species, *corvus Americanus;* and specimen, some particular crow under observation, — for example, old "Silver-Spot," so agreeably described by Mr. Seton-Thompson. This distinction is a perfectly simple one. When we say that the fox terrier is intelligent, we mean that the type is intelligent. When I say that my fox terrier is intelligent, I have the individual in mind.

This distinction applied to fiction.

Let us see how all this bears on the question of character-drawing in fiction. We will suppose that the novelist wishes to introduce into his story the figure of Abraham Lincoln. It is obvious that he must represent Lincoln as

belonging to the family of man, the genus American, the species Westerner, but that all these generic and typical traits must be further differentiated by delineating the qualities which distinguish the individual specimen, Abraham Lincoln, from other Western American men.

Confusion of the type with the individual.

But nothing is more frequent in fiction than to find these two things confused. How does it happen? First, through an attempt to describe the individual by typical traits merely. If I say that a tramp came to my back door this morning and asked for some breakfast, and that he had torn shoes, old clothes, a slouching gait, the face of a drinker, I do not identify him in the slightest. If I were to put the police on his trail, armed with such a description, it would fit fifty other tramps as well as the one I have in mind. It is obvious that to identify this particular individual I must be able to describe some peculiarity of person or costume which differentiates him from others of his class, or at least to describe such a combination of qualities and details as is not likely to be found in the case of any other tramp.

Secondly, the type and the individual are often confused in character-drawing because the writer substitutes for the individual some moral abstraction. In the old moralities and miracle plays such characters as Good Fame, Virtuous Living, Tom Tosspot, Cuthbert Cutpurse, are nothing but signs of certain moral qualities, to be praised or reprehended according to the pleasure of the play-wright. Even the Elizabethan drama, in all its wealth of individual portraiture, is constantly presenting to us personages who are mere personifications of moral qualities, and Bunyan's masterly power of characterization does not prevent some readers from considering Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Mr. Faintheart to be moral images rather than men.

Moral abstractions.

Thirdly, the type is frequently confused with the individual because the artist gives a caricature rather than a portrait. In pictorial caricature, as we know, certain features are exaggerated until the individual is far removed from reality. Tweed and Croker, if we are to believe the caricaturists, are not real persons. They are simply embodiments of certain abstract and

Caricatures.

highly reprehensible moral qualities. It is easy to point out, in some of the very greatest fiction, examples of the fatal ease with which the writer can turn a portrait into a caricature. Sir Pitt Crawley's stinginess apparently tickled Thackeray's fancy so thoroughly that he could not resist the temptation to exaggerate it until it was so much out of drawing that it robbed the character of its actuality. As compared with Sir Pitt Crawley, Becky Sharp's portrait shows constant restraint and a steady sense of proportion. Those personages of Dickens whom we are wont to speak of as "Dickensy" characters are all too frequently caricatures rather than portraits. Certain traits are so magnified for purposes of identification or humor that we see not the real person but only the "gag," the trick, the turn of farce, which presents him to the audience. Children delight in this sort of thing, of course, but many older persons wonder, when they come to Dickens again, how all this false drawing could ever have given them pleasure.

The causes of confusion: lack of clear vision.

It is more interesting, however, to inquire into the causes of this confusion. Why is it that the

artist allows himself to substitute typical for individual traits and hence to lose the power of imparting a sense of actuality to his fictitious personages? It is often true, no doubt, that the author fails to see clearly what he wants to express. He falls into abstract, typical delineation through mere irresolution or inattention, or it may be the overfondness for what he may like to call the "ideal," that is, for the abstract rather than for the concrete. To this latter predilection must be attributed the feebleness of a great deal of Romantic art. It accounts for the weakness of Scott's character-drawing of ladies in comparison with his masterly delineation of peasant girls.

Prevalence of fashionable types.

Then, too, the prevalence of a fashionable artistic type is often found to overpower the artist's originality. The "Gibson girl," who is said to be due originally to the influence of a certain model in Mr. Gibson's early career as an artist, has continued not only to dominate most of Mr. Gibson's own drawings of women, but has been nothing less than an obsession, though a charming one, upon a whole school of American draughtsmen. In similar fash-

ion, there was a sort of Richard Harding Davis heroine who used to make her periodical appearance in college stories. Indeed, college stories furnish an excellent example of the prevalence of a certain fashionable type and the consequent neglect of individual portraiture. In all the college stories which have appeared in the last dozen years how few sharply characterized individuals are to be found! It is far easier to describe the category under which a particular student belongs and to give the general traits of the "football man," the "sport," the "grind," than it is to portray the particular person who belongs to the category. In other words, most authors of college stories content themselves, as far as character-depiction is concerned, by describing the pigeon-hole rather than the man in the pigeon-hole.

Failure in expression.

In the third place, although the fiction-writer may see the individual with perfect distinctness, either as actually present before him or in imaginative vision, he may nevertheless not be able to express what he sees. He draws the general characteristics of the type rather than the individual characteristics of the person because his vocab-

ulary is not sufficiently delicate and precise for the task of portrayal. Here, again, college stories afford a useful illustration. It is not to be supposed that the authors of those stories see their fellows less distinctly, nor that they perceive imaginative types with less clearness of outline, simply because they are dealing with young men and young women. The defect is chiefly to be attributed to the lack of training in flexible and precise expression.

Few individual characters created.

But for one or another of these three causes which have been briefly outlined, how few individual characters have been created in fiction in the last ten years! We have had certain types drawn over and over again with wearisome reiteration, but we have had few fictitious personages who have given us the impression of actuality. It must be remembered after all that the type is, in the last analysis, only a subjective abstraction, either in the reader's mind or in the mind of the artist. The masters of fiction, surely, have generally contented themselves with creating personages and letting the type take care of itself. If the personage be so drawn as to convey a

vivid sense of reality, his individual characteristics will be firmly outlined; and if he gives to the reader an impression of moral unity, there is little doubt that he will in the true sense contain the type. For the type, so far as it is of any artistic value, is implicit in the individual.

Character-contrast.

Before bringing to a close the consideration of the delineation of character, we should note that some of the greatest triumphs in the portrayal of character have been due to an effective sense of character-contrast. The differences between members of the same family — as for instance between Adam and Seth Bede, Rachel and Beatrix Esmond, George and Henry Warrington — have been utilized with consummate effect. The same is true of those pairs or trios of friends of which the history of the drama and of the novel offers so many brilliant examples. Hamlet and Horatio, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd, gain immensely in saliency and picturesqueness of outline because they are thrown into dramatic contrast with those friends in whose presence we are wont to watch them.

Character-grouping on a still wider scale results from those manifold social, economical, and political relations which place differently constituted individuals in clearly marked lines of relationship. Master and servant, mistress and maid, lover and confidant, debtor and creditor, the dwellers on the farm or in the village, the representatives of a profession, the adventurers in some commercial or political enterprise, are linked together by bonds which give an opportunity for striking groups of characters. Indeed, in every story, as in every play, there is commonly some unifying principle, like a love affair, a crime, a journey, a business scheme, which instantly throws all the persons of the story into some sort of relationship with one another. Their attitude towards certain facts instantly ranks them, as by a kind of irresistible physical or moral gravitation. They are thrown into main groups or subordinate groups according to the part they play in the main plot or in the sub-plot of the tale. They work out their individual destiny in harmony or in contrast with the general destiny that presides over the fate of the

Character-grouping.

personages in the narrative; they advance or retreat, compromise, surrender, or triumph as the judgment and the insight of the writer shall dictate. But in all the manifold and subtle relations into which the persons in the story are thrown, there is an opportunity for the most searching, the most spirited, the most brilliant methods of character-delineation. If, as Goethe said, a character is formed in the stream of the world, the characters in a novel form themselves into more and more plastic outlines as the stream of the story sweeps to its close.

Harmony of character and action.

It is, therefore, quite impossible to conceive of characters in a novel without taking into consideration the actions in which those characters are involved. The two elements, character and action, should be harmoniously treated. There will always be in fiction, doubtless, examples of "plot-ridden" characters; that is, persons whose rôle in the story makes them do something which they would not naturally do. A high-minded girl is made to listen at the door simply because it is desirable that she should be aware of a conversation taking place between her father and

her lover. An honest man is made to commit a crime because a crime is essential to the particular web of circumstances which the author desires to weave. But these instances of the violation of truth in character are usually punished by the sense of disbelief which the reader is quick to feel. It is natural that we should demand in fiction, as in life, that the character should be true to itself, that under the given circumstances it should exhibit consistent behavior.

Moral unity.

What is more, we instinctively demand in the characters that impress us by their individuality that moral unity by virtue of which each character shows evidence of what has happened to it in the past. Just as each one of us is conscious of his past, and is also conscious of the possibilities of the future, and bears this consciousness, although perhaps without realizing it, into every act of the present, so we desire that the men and women described for us in the pages of the novelist should give this sense of the continuity, the unbroken web of life. To enter a railroad station — say at Buffalo — and see an east-bound express standing on the track, resplendent in

paint and gilt, and ready to pull out of the station, is to receive an impression of actuality and power. But one has a far higher sense of power if one watches at the station this same train coming in from the West, an hour late, with vestibule and roof and windows covered with snow and ice, in evidence of the storm through which the train has passed. We picture to ourselves the winter landscape over which it has been flying in its struggle against time. We know that before it reaches Albany or New York that lost hour must be made up, if engine and engineer can do it. The past and the future of the train unite in their impression on our consciousness, and impart a thrilling sensation of personal force. In the same way, our vision of men and women in the greatest books of fiction is not confined to the immediate moment when they are present to our view; we are more or less dimly conscious of the past and of the future of those characters and of all the moral potentialities of their lives.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLOT

"Let him [the fiction-writer] choose a motive, whether of character or of passion; carefully construct his plot so that every incident is an illustration of the motive, and every property employed shall bear to it a near relation of congruity or contrast; avoid a sub-plot, unless, as sometimes in Shakespeare, the sub-plot be a reversion or complement of the main intrigue; . . . and allow neither himself in the narrative nor any character in the course of the dialogue, to utter one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story. . . . And as the root of the whole matter, let him bear in mind that his novel is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point of life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity." R. L. STEVENSON, *A Humble Remonstrance.*

What plot means.

IN discussing the affiliations of the novel with the play, in the third chapter of this book, I have had occasion to say something about the plot and its relation to the theme and to the characters of the play or the novel. The word means, as its etymology implies, a weaving together. Or, still more simply, we understand by plot that which happens to the characters, — the various ways in which the forces represented

by the different personages of the story are made to harmonize or clash through external action.

Sources of plot.

In determining the nature and the details of the action of a story, it is obvious that the novelist may draw on the same sources of knowledge which he uses in the construction of the characters. The plot may be suggested to him by his own observation, by memories of what he has heard or read, or through the pure gift of inventiveness. One can scarcely say that there is marked superiority in any one of these methods. Many novelists, like Hawthorne, have been inclined to confess ruefully: "I have seen so little of the real world, that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories out of." On the other hand, the experience of writers like Dickens, Thackeray, or Mr. Kipling has crowded their memory with incidents and events admirably adapted to furnish the raw material of countless plots. Sometimes, no doubt, it is difficult to readjust such matter and make it sufficiently plastic to give free play to the imagination. The stories that come to one by inheritance through half forgotten memo-

ries of country-side legends and traditions, narratives which one dimly remembers from old books or scraps of history and ballads, have often proved more stimulating to the constructive imagination than any hints given by actual experience. Just as Liszt wrote his rhapsodies by utilizing hints and fragments of folk-lore and popular melodies, so Thomas Hardy finds it easy in his "Wessex Tales" to utilize the histories of decaying families, stories of adventure of long ago, strange tales that have been whispered by the hearth-fire from immemorial times. "Truth is stranger than fiction," and truth often needs to be recast by a fictive imagination before it is quite ready for the fiction-writer's hand.

Often a matter of instinct.

But this matter of plot gives little difficulty to those born story-tellers who have the gift for conceiving characters in action. For these natural spinners of the yarn, to whom invention is the most easy, the most fascinating, the most captivating of gifts, — for a Stevenson, a Scott, a Dumas, — to block out the plot of a story is a mere bagatelle. In Scott's own words, he "took the easiest path across country,"

following merely his whim or his natural instinct; and one is bound to record the fact that the novels written or planned by these reckless, inveterate story-tellers afford quite as much satisfaction to technical students of plot-construction as do the more elaborate plans and devices of those writers whose interest lies foremost in the creation of character, and with whom the element of action is of secondary concern.

Plot in its simplest form.

Plot in its simplest form may concern itself with nothing more than the progress of a single character and its development and experiences at the different stages of its career. Take, for instance, that admirable story by Hawthorne, "Wakefield," which concerns itself with the psychological analysis of the character of an excellent gentleman to whom it occurred one day that it would be a good plan not to go home that night, and who consequently sought lodgings in another street and stayed away from home for twenty years. Hawthorne makes real to us the whimsical, yet singularly human and consistent motive that actuated this strange character in his astonishing performance; and although the story

involves but a single personage, it would be difficult to point to any short story of equal length in which the reader feels greater interest.

Dealing with two characters.

Usually, however, the plot of a story involves at least two characters. They embody different forces, different ways of facing and fighting the world of circumstance with which they are brought into collision. In "Silas Marner," for instance, the human problem involved is the influence of the love of a child on the lonely and embittered nature of a hermit. The action of the story is designed to bring these two forces together and to note the nature of their mutual reactions. The plot of Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" involves the struggle between scientific curiosity and paternal love. These forces are embodied in the persons of the scientist and his daughter, and the plot is inevitably worked out by the natural laws of human character, "the truth of the human heart," under the peculiar circumstances which the author chooses to describe. And, to choose another short story of a different type, there is Mr. Kipling's "His Private Honour." In

this story a young British lieutenant, in a moment of extreme irritation, strikes a private soldier. The act is one that calls for dismissal from the Queen's service. What is the officer to do? He cannot send money to the soldier — who happens to be the redoubtable Ortheris himself — nor can he apologize to him in private. Neither can he let matters drift. Ortheris, too, has his own code of pride and honor; he too is "a servant of the Queen;" but how is the insult to be atoned for? The way out of this apparently hopeless muddle is a beautifully simple one, after all. The lieutenant invites Ortheris to go shooting with him, and when they are alone, asks him to "take off his coat." "Thank you, sir!" says Ortheris. The two men fight until Ortheris owns that he is beaten. Then the lieutenant apologizes for the original blow, and officer and private walk back to camp devoted friends. That fight is the moral salvation of Lieutenant Ouless. The plot of "His Private Honour" is, therefore, the narrative of the struggle between two kinds of pride, the pride of the officer and that of the enlisted man, and the solution comes through Mr. Kipling's power

Rudyard Kipling

to make us realize the English love of fair play, the fundamental human equality which is common to both men despite the difference of their rank.

Three characters.

It is far easier, however, to throw the lines of a plot into swift complication when there are at least three characters involved. The attitude of two of these characters towards the third may instantly be utilized to establish and carry forward new lines of action. In "The Knight's Tale" of Chaucer the two young men imprisoned in the tower catch their first glimpse of Emily, and this moment marks the first entanglement of the threads of the future plot. In Miss Wilkins's "New England Nun" there is an extremely skillful example of this kind of plot. The story opens with a picture of Louisa Ellis, an "old maid," sitting in her quiet room on a summer afternoon, and receiving an embarrassed visit from her betrothed lover, Joe Daggett. Their engagement has lasted fifteen years, while he has been absent in Australia seeking his fortune. Each has been faithful to the other, yet now that the wedding is only a week away, disorder and confusion seem entering

her cloistered life in place of peace and harmony. She does not dare tell her lover how much, after all, she dreads to marry him. He, too, has become aware that their passion is a thing of the past; he is conscious of a love for Lily Dyer, a younger woman; but he is as finely loyal to his old promise as Louisa herself. How does Miss Wilkins cut the knot? By making Louisa stroll down the road one moonlight night and unwittingly overhear a conversation between Joe and Lily, in which she learns that they love each other, but that they both believe it cruel and wrong for Joe to break his engagement with Louisa. It is now easy and natural for Louisa to release Joe, to see him married to Lily Dyer, and happily, prayerfully, to number her own days "like an uncloistered nun."

The "three-leaved clover" relationship.

It may be added that the essential elements of this three-cornered game played by two men and one woman, or two women and one man, here handled by Miss Wilkins in one of its most innocent and unsophisticated phases, present to the fiction-writer, for purely technical reasons, a fascinating problem. Such a three-

fold relationship inevitably involves the play of strong passions, the elements of fear, of jealousy, of danger, of surprise, of remorse; and all of these are furnished, as it were, ready to the novelist's hand by the theme itself.

Complication of plot.

As was pointed out in the chapter devoted to the drama, the complication of the plot begins with the introduction of new incidents or new personages, or with the introduction of new motives growing out of the relationships which are made evident at the outset of the story. In Hawthorne's "The House of the Seven Gables" the opening of the shop marks the beginning of the complication. In "The Scarlet Letter" it is the entrance of Roger Chillingworth. It is an interesting question how far the complication of the plot may be carried out without confusing or perplexing the reader. Novelists of the Latin races have commonly given evidence of a greater instinct for unity, are more simple in the constructive features of their work, than those of the Teutonic races. The novels of Dickens and Thackeray probably mark the extreme limit of complexity, as regards the number of personages introduced, the

variety of sub-plots, and the length of time required for the main action of the story. There are said to be seventy-five personages in "Our Mutual Friend," and sixty in "Vanity Fair." In "Middlemarch" there are twenty-two persons whose portraits are painted at full length.[1] American fiction has apparently been more influenced of late by Continental than by English examples, and the result has been a more marked simplicity in construction.

Incident and situation.

In studying the complication of the plot, it often becomes advantageous to distinguish between incidents which reveal the true nature of the characters and situations which determine character. The difference in the thing is more to be insisted upon than the differentiation of names, and yet it is fair to characterize as an "incident" any event which gives the reader a clearer insight into the constitution and motives of the personages in the story. In "The House of the Seven Gables" the elaborate scene at the breakfast-table has for its sole aim the presentation of the character of

[1] C. F. Johnson, *Elements of Literary Criticism*, p. 89. New York: Harpers.

Clifford, and the whole chapter is devoted to the revelation of the finer and more æsthetic traits of his worn, delicate nature. It is for this purpose only that the breakfast-table scene finds its justification. In "Henry Esmond," Harry's drive on the downs with Lord Mohun is the incident used to give a more complete exposition of character, as well as of the relationship gradually growing up between Harry and Rachel Esmond. It determines nothing. It simply informs us of what is going on, what must be reckoned with. On the other hand, to take another illustration from the same novel, the scene where Harry sees Beatrix descending the staircase, and also the one where Harry breaks his sword in the presence of the Pretender, or in "The House of the Seven Gables" again, in the scene where Judge Pyncheon demands entrance into the parlor and is refused, — these are situations which really determine character as well as reveal it. Esmond is a different man after those scenes have been depicted; and Judge Pyncheon has himself been judged.

Climax.

Perhaps enough has been said in the third chapter to illustrate

the similarity between the climax in the novel and the climax in the play. In both of these parallel forms of literature there is commonly some scene which marks the greatest tension, the keenest suspense, involved in the relation of the characters. The elopement of Stephen Guest and Maggie Tulliver, Gwendolen's awful moment of hesitation when Grandcourt is struggling in the water, will illustrate George Eliot's management of climax passages. In such passages the personal forces involved are for the instant in equilibrium. Thenceforward everything sweeps on to the dénoûment or catastrophe of the story. There is little difference between the novel and the play in the technical disposition of the series of incidents and situations which make up the "rising" and the "falling" action.

Catastrophe.

There is, however, a noticeable distinction in the technical handling of the catastrophe. The absolute necessity in the drama of externalizing upon the stage the forces knit together in the final struggle makes compulsory the actual exhibition of various events which the novelist would prefer to suggest merely. Indeed, it has come to be the favorite theory with a certain

school of psychological novelists that, as life seldom presents any dramatic catastrophes, fiction had better avoid catastrophes too. In the novels of this sort nothing in particular occurs. At the close we miss the "God bless you, my children!" and also the tragic allotment of disaster or disgrace. The characters live on, quite as if nothing had happened, and it is only the new insight into personality, the new descriptions of the natural world or of social forces, which the reader has as a reward for his pains.

The character novel.

All this turns, as a matter of course, upon the relation of the personages to the underlying theme. In the novel of character, as opposed to the novel of incident, the author is chiefly concerned with the solution of certain problems of emotion or of will. When he has worked these out to his satisfaction, his task is finished, and he becomes relatively indifferent to the final disposition of all the personages of the tale. It is well known that Hawthorne added the present closing chapter to "The Marble Faun" at the request of his publishers, and this fact suggests the irreconcilable difference between the point of view of the romancer

absorbed in moral problems and of the reader who merely wants to know what happened "ever afterwards."

The plot-novel.

In the plot-novel, on the other hand, the inner truth of character may often be neglected or distorted, provided successive shocks of surprise and pleasure are cleverly arranged. The detective story, for instance, deals chiefly with the elements of curiosity and suspense. But the curiosity, while it must be stimulating, must not be carried to the extreme of perplexity, and the suspense must not be too long sustained. In proportion as the stress is laid upon adventure merely, as in the picaresque novel, there need be little if any complexity in the plot. The mere succession of incidents, like those in Stevenson's "St. Ives," is enough to hold the fascinated attention of the reader. The weakness, however, in many of the modern types of the novel of adventure, is not due to placing too much stress upon mere incident as an element, but to the fact that character-interest has become a negligible quantity. If the reader does not, for the time being, believe in the reality of those characters whose adventures he is asked

to follow, he soon finds himself little concerned with the adventures. For, after all, as the history of the drama has shown so abundantly, that which perennially fascinates us in the human spectacle is the exhibition of character in action. Characters who do not act, and conversely the mere outward show and stir of movement not informed by any real intellectual or passional life, alike fail to move our interest, our hopes, or fears.

Mystery and mystification.

The question of suspense in the plot leads naturally to the element of mystery. In any good story we are led to a normal interest both in what the characters will do under the stress of unsuspected circumstances and in the shape which events will take. But this expectation of "something evermore about to be," which lends interest to fiction as it does to life, must be distinguished from that element of mystery with which many novelists have loved to surround certain of their characters, and in which they have liked to hide the intricacies of their plots. It is in this sense that Miriam in "The Marble Faun" is a mysterious character, and that there is a "mystery" in most detective stories. While this element of mystery is

by no means essential to the interest of a work of fiction, it is capable of the most artistic handling. But when the mystery becomes mystification, when both the personages in the story and the readers of the story are deliberately fooled by the author, the book commonly pays at last the penalty of this deception. When we learn at the end of Mrs. Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho" that all the mysterious terrors which have played such a potent rôle in the plot were the result of a mechanical contrivance, it is impossible to reread the book with any of those delightful thrills of horror which the impressionable reader experienced upon the first reading. But between this deliberate deception of the reader and the painful efforts of some realistic novelist to place the reader in possession of all the facts, there is an infinite variety of possible methods. Perhaps the critic cannot do more than say that that book is likely to give the most pleasure to the reader which presents, in accordance with the conventions and in the terms of art, the sense of uncertainty, the blindfold striving, the constant awaiting of the revelation of the coming moment, which play such an appreciable part in life itself.

Closely allied with the element of mystery is that of accident, sometimes used as a complicating but more often as a resolving force. It is accident that weaves and unravels the plot of many a novel. The hero picks up a handkerchief, or steps on a lady's train, or unwittingly insults an unknown rival, or knocks at the wrong door of an inn, and upon these trivialities hangs, or seems to hang, his entire fortune. Similarly, when the climax of a story has been reached, there is often in fiction, as in the drama, some petty incident, apparently accidental but really hidden deep in the nature of things, which determines the catastrophe.

Accident.

Indeed, it may be said that it matters little how frequently the novelist complicates or simplifies his plot by the introduction of the element of accident, provided the accidents seem to be thus a part of the natural order of things. Richard the Lion-Hearted dies by a chance arrow, and yet what other fate would be so inevitable to an adventurous, reckless, wandering hero? Bill Sykes hangs himself with a noose of his own making, and yet Dickens seems to be a fellow-worker with Providence in de-

Retribution.

signing such an appropriate and wholly pleasing end for such a villain. It is a temptation to the unskilled novelist to kill off his personages at a convenient time, to resort to all sorts of advantageous and unexpected devices to get rid of the superfluous figures in his story. But to link apparently accidental, external circumstances with inner laws of character and conduct, to make what happens to the characters a fit result of all which the characters have done or been in the past, gives an opportunity for the most profound insight into the moral structure of the world. When Judge Pyncheon tries by brute energy and with deadly hatred of purpose to force his way into the little parlor of the Pyncheon house, Hepzibah says to him, "God will not let you." The Judge replies, "We shall see." And we do see through the long hours of the ensuing night the terrible retribution which came instantly upon him. Yet Hawthorne takes pains to suggest that there may be a perfectly natural physical explanation of the sudden death of the Judge. Not the "visitation of God," as juries are wont to say when at their wits' end, but an inherited tendency to apoplexy,

joined with a moment of intense bodily and mental excitement, is sufficient to account for the Judge's death. An even more familiar example of extraordinary insight and truth on the novelist's part is evinced in the Templar's death in "Ivanhoe." Here, too, a natural explanation is at hand. Ivanhoe has appealed to "the judgment of God;" yet the Templar dies, Scott tells us, through the "violence of his own contending passions." But the threads of the story are drawn together with so sure a hand that the reader feels certain that this dread event is fated. "'This is indeed the judgment of God,' said the Grand Master, looking upwards — '*Fiat voluntas tua.*'"

Fate in the modern novel.

It is hard to say, indeed, just what we mean by fate in discussing the dénoûment or catastrophe of the modern novel. It is easy enough in commenting on the Greek drama to point out the beginning and the end of the Nemesis action, and the conventions of the Greek drama as well as many of its moral implications have descended to us almost unbroken. Yet it is hardly possible, in a world pervaded, like our modern world, by Christian ethics and a Chris-

tian philosophy, that the old Greek theory of the rôle which fate plays in human affairs should still prevail. In one sense the world of art, the world revealed to us by the imagination of the novelist or the poet, is a world which is neither Christian nor pagan. Even this imaginary world, however, can never be unmoral unless it be at the same time unreal. "Morality," said Mme. de Staël very finely, "is in the nature of things." The laws of human life itself, laws older than any pagan or Christian interpretation or revelation of them, assert that in any long view of life it is well with the good and ill with the wicked. It is true that in any stage of the world's progress it is possible that the individual artist may revert to an earlier, outworn type of philosophy and faith. He may cherish a pagan theory of the Christian world. Like Thomas Hardy at the close of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," which is an admirable expression of a poignant, thoughtful, yet thoroughly pagan interpretation of life, he may utter a cynical jest at the moral order of this planet. Says Mr. Hardy, "Time, that arch satirist, had had his joke out with Tess."

"Poetic justice."

This is consistent with the theme of the book, but it is inconsistent with the world in which Mr. Hardy is living and with the noblest teachings of the greatest masters of his art. In assigning "poetic justice" to the men and women of their stories, they have succeeded most truly when they have allotted the fates of their personages in accordance with what they have conceived to be the laws of Divine Justice. The profounder artists in the imaginary world of fiction, and the Providence, however named, who presides over the real world of nature and human life, are working on the same terms and expressing the same truth.

Sub-plots.

In following the main lines of action in a story, the student of fiction will do well to observe the different ways in which the main and the subordinate plots are related. Often the subordinate plot is the mere reflection of the greater plot, as the love affair of Lorenzo and Jessica in "The Merchant of Venice" is the obvious replica of that of Portia and Bassanio. And where the theme of the novelist is philo-

sophical or scientific, designed to show the presence in human affairs of certain lines of causation and certain modes of thinking and feeling, the lesser group of characters may often be used most skillfully to reflect, in different degrees, the main teaching of the book. Thomas Hardy's peasants furnish excellent examples of this philosophizing, as do the rustics of George Eliot. Frequently the sub-plot follows inevitably upon the main plot. If the story of "Silas Marner" turns upon the redemption of a lonely old man by a child, it becomes necessary to provide a child for the purpose, and this leads to the invention of Godfrey Cass's unfortunate marriage. Very often, however, the sub-plot is joined to the main plot in a purely artificial fashion. The minor characters are designed to give variety or relief, to supply a love interest or an element of comedy, or to pique one's historical interest concerning some great person who is made to appear for the moment upon the scene. Rose and Langham, although they are most attractively and carefully wrought figures, have nothing to do with the real plot of "Robert Elsmere."

George Eliot

Savonarola has no rôle to play in George Eliot's "Romola" except in so far as he is introduced to give advice to the heroine in the hour of her need, and to illustrate certain characteristic phases of fifteenth century Florence.

Plot-determined characters.

Something has already been said about the danger of plot-determined characters. Where the plot requires a love episode the novelist is tempted to make a given man fall in love with a given woman "upon compulsion," even if the natures of the two persons, as well as the circumstances involved, protest against the alliance. There is no surer mark of the amateur in fiction than the fascination said to be exerted by certain characters who obviously have no fascination to exert. "Bright ideas" come to characters who could never by any stretch of the imagination conceive of a bright idea. We are assured of the sudden access of courage or devotion or folly in persons in whose temperaments and characters there is no room for these traits which it becomes necessary for the unfortunate author to discover and utilize.

Plot as related to setting.

Finally, the action of the story itself should be related not only to the characters themselves, but to those circumstances and events indirectly involved in the tale, and furnishing as it were the background and setting for it. The plot of the "Tale of Two Cities," for instance, must do no violence to the supposed characters of Dr. Manette and Sydney Carton, but it must also be faithful as far as possible to the spirit and the external facts of the French Revolution itself. Indeed, in the case of this particular book, it is well known that Dickens's imagination began to work on the period, upon the events and passions of that stormy time, rather than upon the distinctive personages of the tale. He carried around in his pocket, for months before he began to write the story, a copy of Carlyle's "French Revolution," familiarizing himself with the dramatic forces involved in that extraordinary epoch. When he came later to invent his personages and to assign to them their appropriate rôles in the drama which they were to play, he depicted both characters and action in harmony with the enveloping circumstances, with the fears, the

hopes, the anguish, the suspense of the Revolution itself. If, as we saw at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, it is necessary that the characters of a novel should be conceived in reference to the part they are to play in the plot, we must now recognize with equal clearness that the plot itself must stand in artistic relation to the setting.

CHAPTER VII

THE SETTING

"Either on that day or about that time I remember very distinctly his saying to me: 'There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three ways only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly — you must bear with me while I try to make this clear' — (here he made a gesture with his hand as if he were trying to shape something and give it outline and form) — 'you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realize it. I'll give you an example — *The Merry Men*. There I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which the coast affected me.'" *The Life and Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, by GRAHAM BALFOUR.

"It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself. The psychological causes which prompted me to give such details of Florentine life and history as I have given [in *Romola*] are precisely the same as those which determined me in giving the details of English village life in *Silas Marner* or the 'Dodson' life, out of which were developed the destinies of poor Tom and Maggie." GEORGE ELIOT, quoted in her *Life* by J. W. CROSS.

Meaning of the word.

WHEN we read Victor Hugo's "Ninety-Three," Pierre Loti's "Iceland Fisherman," Tolstoi's "War and

Peace," or, to take a modern instance, Mr. Frank Norris's "The Octopus," we are conscious of one strong element of interest which lies outside of the sphere of character or action. This interest is provided by what we will call, for lack of a more satisfactory word, the setting. Sometimes we shall use this word as synonymous with *milieu*, — the circumstances, namely, that surround and condition the appearance of the characters. Sometimes the setting of the novel corresponds precisely to the scenic effects of the stage, in that it gives a mere background for the vivid presentation of the characters. It will thus be seen that in the setting, that *tertium quid* which is neither characters nor action, we have something corresponding to what we should call "atmosphere" if we were to speak in the terms of art, or "environment" if we were to use the terminology of science.

The novelist secures the setting of his stories precisely as he obtains his characters and his plot; that is, by his observation, from his reading, and from that function of the imagination which recombines and invents, using the unassorted

Based upon what?

fragments of experience. Tolstoi's "War and Peace" reproduces the author's memories of the Crimean War. "Lorna Doone" is an accurate presentation of Blackmore's study of the Doone country. In Scott's Borderland novels, as everybody knows, there is an easily successful effort to suggest the atmosphere of his own country-side; and together with this Scott utilized all the materials furnished by his vast and miscellaneous reading to construct the imaginative background for his historical tales. But very few books present to us, as far as the setting is concerned, a strictly veracious, unaltered transcript of life. The novel is rather what a painter would call a composition from studies, and the studies are brought together from strange and unrelated sources. Yet even in the most Utopian of novels, where writers have striven to invent a new world of the future and to present their heroes and heroines in an atmosphere wholly unfamiliar to the contemporary reader, they have never succeeded in getting very far away from the earth we know. The greater triumphs of fictive genius have commonly been in those stories where the setting is that of the ordi-

nary field and stream and town, but where the imagination touches all this with a new transforming light.

Historical setting.

The present passion for historical novels makes the subject of historical setting one of unusual interest. If one compares the work of Scott with that of George Ebers, the novels of Kingsley and Bulwer Lytton with those of Mr. Stanley Weyman and Mr. Maurice Hewlett, one will be conscious of an immense gain in accuracy. The growth of historical knowledge has been constant. There has likewise been a steady increase of interest in antiquarian detail. The elaborate and painful efforts of the modern stage to secure historically correct costuming has unquestionably affected the consciences of our novelists. More than one of them has confessed the toil it has cost him to prepare himself to write a book involving precise knowledge of such matters as heraldry or the details of monastic life. Some of our writers have shown extraordinary zeal in "getting up" their subjects, and have been able, in spite of it, to mould their material with some freedom. Nevertheless, generally speaking, one may say that as the

standard of accuracy rises, the imagination, that other and indispensable end of the balance scales, goes down. The spirit of truth to fact, as we have seen in the chapter on science, has often been hostile to the spirit of imagination. Doubtless there never were such persons as Scott's Saracens or Cooper's Red Men, but fiction would be greatly the loser if Scott and Cooper had confined themselves to the basis of demonstrable fact. That mediæval world in which Scott's imagination moved so delightedly and with such incomparable vigor and variety had no existence outside of the pages of his novels. But "Ivanhoe" is no worse a book from the fact that such Saxons and Normans as move through its pages never wandered over actual English fields.

Local color.

The modern spirit of precise observation, however, has unquestionably aided many novelists in giving to their books the atmosphere of a definite locality. When a writer places the scene of his stories in the Tennessee mountains, a Californian mining camp, upon a New England hillside, or a Louisiana bayou, we can usually depend now-a-days upon a certain fidelity to fact and

sensitiveness to local coloring. He has probably made an honest effort to realize in his story the impression made upon him by the landscape and the people of those quarters of the world.

Occupations and institutions.

The same is true of those studies of great human occupations which have been so frequent in modern fiction. English politics or English clerical life thus affords an effective setting for Trollope's stories. Captain King chooses war, Mr. Hamlin Garland farming, Mr. Richard Harding Davis cosmopolitan adventure, Charles Dudley Warner the life of the unemployed rich, Mr. Zangwill the life of the unemployed poor, as the setting, the enveloping action and circumstances of their stories. Prevalent social ideas, long-standing social institutions, afford similar backgrounds for the work of the novelist. It thus becomes natural to speak of Scott as the romancer of feudalism, or of Mr. Howells as the novelist of American democracy under contemporary social conditions. Other fiction-writers have used socialism or patriotism or monasticism as furnishing the underlying framework for their productions. In all these cases it will be

noted that the setting is something which lies back of the characters, and which may even be considered apart from them.

Landscape setting: Rousseau.

Let us take one of the most striking instances which literature affords of the development of what was once a minor and accidental feature of the work of fiction into a recognized and immensely significant element of it, namely, the evolution of the use of landscape in fiction during the last century and a half. In Rousseau's "New Heloise" there was a new force at work which the readers of that singular romance were not slow to recognize. It was the part which nature herself played in the story. The mountain, the lake, the stream, were there not merely for adornment, but as an integral part of the story itself. All the literary children of Rousseau have followed him in this recognition of the potency of natural scenery as influencing the thoughts and sentiments of human personages. In the fiction of Chateaubriand and of Victor Hugo, of George Sand, of Balzac, of Maupassant, of Pierre Loti, there is everywhere to be traced that influence which was so apparent in the "New Heloise."

Eighteenth century instances: Defoe.

In England and America the indirect influence of Rousseau has been scarcely less significant. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century there is almost no landscape setting worthy of the name. Scarcely more than half a dozen passages describing natural scenery in the modern spirit will occur to the memory of the reader of Defoe. One of the most striking isolated instances of the effective use of setting is that passage in Defoe's "Captain Singleton" which describes, in terms that Robert Louis Stevenson might have envied, a struggle with African wild beasts on "one windy tempestuous night:" —

"During our encampment here we had several adventures with the ravenous creatures of that country; and had not our fire been always kept burning, I question much whether all our fence, though we strengthened it afterwards with twelve or fourteen rows of stakes or more, would have kept us secure. It was always in the night that we had the disturbance of them, and sometimes they came in such multitudes that we thought all the lions and tigers and leopards and wolves of Africa were come together to attack us. One night, being clear moonshine, one of our men being upon the watch, told us he verily believed he saw ten thousand wild creatures of one sort or another pass by our little camp; and as soon as ever they saw the fire

they sheered off, but were sure to howl or roar, or whatever it was, when they were past.

"The music of their voices was very far from being pleasant to us, and sometimes would be so very disturbing that we could not sleep for it; and often our sentinels would call us that were awake to come and look at them. It was one windy tempestuous night, after a very rainy day, that we were indeed all called up; for such innumerable numbers of devilish creatures came about us that our watch really thought they would attack us. They would not come on the side where the fire was; and though we thought ourselves secure everywhere else, yet we all got up, and took to our arms. The moon was near the full, but the air full of flying clouds, and a strange hurricane of wind to add to the terror of the night; when, looking on the back part of our camp, I thought I saw a creature within our fortification, and so indeed he was, except his haunches; for he had taken a running leap, I suppose, and with all his might had thrown himself clear over our palisadoes, except one strong pile, which stood higher than the rest, and which had caught hold of him, and by his weight he had hanged himself upon it, the spike of the pile running into his hinder-haunch or thigh, on the inside, and by that he hung growling and biting the wood for rage. I snatched up a lance from one of the negroes that stood just by me, and, running to him, struck it three or four times into him, and despatched him."

Mrs. Radcliffe.

Fielding has some admirable paragraphs of out-door description, but ordinarily, even in Fielding's novels, it rains

only to delay the coach, and not to affect or symbolize the sentiments of the passengers. But with the rise of the romantic school at the end of the century came an inrush of sentiment regarding natural scenery. In such a typical novel of this school as Anne Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho," hero and heroine alike tremble into tears under the slightest provocation of the landscape. Here are four representative passages: —

"It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the God of Heaven and Earth. In scenes like these she would often linger alone, wrapped in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west; till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell, or the distant barking of a watch-dog, was all that broke the stillness of the evening. Then the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves, at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting in the twilight; the cottage lights, now seen, and now lost — were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry."

. . . . . .

"The dawn, which softened the scenery with its

peculiar gray tint, now dispersed, and Emily watched the progress of the day, first trembling on the tops of the highest cliffs, then touching them with splendid light, while their sides and the vale below were still wrapped in dewy mist. Meanwhile the sullen gray of the eastern clouds began to blush, then to redden, and then to glow with a thousand colors, till the golden light darted over all the air, touched the lower points of the mountain's brow, and glanced in long sloping beams upon the valley and its stream. All nature seemed to have awakened from death into life. The spirit of St. Aubert was renovated. His heart was full; he wept, and his thoughts ascended to the great Creator."

. . . . . .

"From Beaujeau the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travellers into the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors, and eternal snow whitened the summits of the mountains. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen — so deep, that the thunder of the torrent, which was seen to foam along the bottom, was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones, others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale.

Around, on every side far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur — the long perspective of mountain-tops, tinged with ethereal blue, or white with snow; valleys of ice and forests of gloomy fir. The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds. They had no words to express the sublime emotions they felt. A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St. Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions."

. . . . . .

"In the cool of the evening, the party embarked in Montoni's gondola, and rowed out upon the sea. The red glow of sunset still touched the waves, and lingered in the west, where the melancholy gleam seemed slowly expiring, while the dark blue of the upper ether began to twinkle with stars. Emily sat, given up to pensive and sweet emotions. The smoothness of the water over which she glided, its reflected images — a new heaven and trembling stars below the waves, with shadowy outlines of towers and porticoes — conspired with the stillness of the hour, interrupted only by the passing wave or the notes of distant music, to raise those emotions to enthusiasm. As she listened to the measured sound of the oars, and to the remote warblings that came in the breeze, her softened mind returned to the memory of St. Aubert, and to Valancourt, and tears stole to her eyes."

In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century this sort of

Nineteenth century.

sentiment was left mainly to the poets. The use of landscape as an aid in powerful emotional effects begins again, however, with Dickens. It is noticeably rare in Thackeray, although here and there in single phrases and sentences he introduces the element of landscape with singularly delicate effect. But George Eliot, William Black, and Thomas Hardy have written whole chapters, one may almost say books, drenched with their feeling for the natural landscape against which their fictitious personages are relieved. In the stories of Ouida, and in some of the sketches of Lafcadio Hearn, the landscape sense runs riot. But if rightly subordinated to the human element, as is almost always the case in the novels of Turgenieff, or in the stories of Mr. Kipling or Miss Jewett, it becomes an element of extraordinary power and charm.

Used for vividness.

Sometimes the landscape seems to be used for mere vividness, for giving us a clearer vision of the characters at some crisis of the story, or simply for painting an attractive picture. Here are a few sentences from James Lane Allen's "The Choir Invisible" which are designed

apparently to do nothing more than give us an intimate sense of the physical presence of the things and the persons described.

"Near the door stood a walnut tree with widespreading branches wearing the fresh plumes of late May, plumes that hung down over the door and across the windows, suffusing the interior with a soft twilight of green and brown shadows. A shaft of sunbeams penetrating a crevice fell on the white neck of a yellow collie that lay on the ground with his head on his paws, his eyes fixed reproachfully on the heels of the horse outside, his ears turned back towards his master. Beside him a box had been kicked over: tools and shoes scattered. A faint line of blue smoke sagged from the dying coals of the forge towards the door, creeping across the anvil bright as if tipped with silver. And in one of the darkest corners of the shop, near a bucket of water in which floated a huge brown gourd, Peter and John sat on a bench while the story of O'Bannon's mischief-making was begun and finished. It was told by Peter with much cordial rubbing of his elbows in the palms of his hands and much light-hearted smoothing of his apron over his knees. At times a cloud, passing beneath the sun, threw the shop into heavier shadow; and then the schoolmaster's dark figure faded into the tone of the sooty wall behind him and only his face, with the contrast of its white linen collar below and the bare discernible lights of his auburn hair above — his face proud, resolute, astounded, pallid, suffering — started out of the gloom like a portrait from an old canvas."

Contrast.

Sometimes this vividness of effect is secured by the familiar artistic principle of contrast. The physical weariness of the figure in Millet's picture of "The Sower" gains in poignancy because of the infinite peace of the evening landscape against which the figure is outlined. In similar fashion, in Mr. Hardy's "The Return of the Native," what a Rembrandt-like feeling for light and shade is in that gambling scene on the heath when the two men throw dice by the light of glow-worms! "The Choir Invisible" may be used for another illustration. The second chapter introduces Mrs. Falconer at work in her frontier garden, and these lines present the singular contrast between the woman and her surroundings: —

"From every direction the forest appeared to be rushing in upon that perilous little reef of a clearing — that unsheltered island of human life, newly displaying itself amid the ancient, blood-flecked, horror-haunted sea of woods. And shipwrecked on this island, tossed to it by one of the long tidal waves of history, there to remain in exile from the manners, the refinement, the ease, the society to which she had always been accustomed, this remarkable gentle-woman."

Harmony.

The principle of artistic harmony is utilized at least as frequently as

that of contrast. The Wordsworthian shepherd seems to be, as Wordsworth indeed usually conceives him, a part of the very hills where his sheep are pastured. Cooper's Indians and frontiersmen blend into his forest backgrounds with a harmony that is the result of true artistic instinct. Let us take additional illustrations from "The Choir Invisible:" —

"And then more dreadful years and still sadder times; as when one morning towards daybreak, by the edge of a darker forest draped with snow where the frozen dead lay thick, they found an officer's hat half filled with snow, and near by, her father fallen face downward."

Or this: —

"She quickly dropped her head again; she shifted her position; a band seemed to tighten around her throat; until, in a voice hardly to be heard, she murmured falteringly: 'I have promised to marry Joseph.' He did not speak or move, but continued to stand leaning against the lintel of the doorway, looking down on her. The color was fading from the west, leaving it ashen white. And so standing in the dying radiance, he saw the long bright day of his young hope come to its close; he drained to its dregs his cup of bitterness she had prepared for him; learned his first lesson in the victory of little things over the larger purposes of life, over the nobler planning; bit the dust of the heart's first defeat and tragedy."

Or again: —

"The next morning the parson, standing a white cold shepherd before his chilly wilderness flock, preached a sermon from the text: 'I shall go softly all my years.' While the heads of the rest were bowed during the last moments of prayer, she rose and slipped out. 'Yes,' she said to herself, gathering her veil closely about her face as she alighted at the door of her house and the withered leaves of November were whirled fiercely about her feet, 'I shall go softly all my years.'"

Influencing the characters.

It will be observed that in these passages from Mr. Allen, as in countless similar passages from fiction-writers of our generation, the landscape setting actually influences the moods of his characters, and in this way plays no inconsiderable rôle in the evolution of the plot. M. Brunetière, in a well known critical essay, has brought M. Zola to task for pretending that the varying color in the water in the gutter on different mornings should influence the action of his hero, Coupeau. But the principle which is here illustrated in its extreme form is one that cannot be neglected in a study of present-day fiction. Let us choose a more sympathetic instance of the influence of landscape on character. It shall be from Mr. James Shorthouse's "Blanche, Lady Falaise:" —

"They came back down the steep path over the strewn and withered leaves. The rain clouds were sweeping from the valley across the sun, and the bareness and chill of winter was on the woods and on the blackened grass. A blank depression and presentiment settled down upon Blanche's spirit. It seemed to her as if she were walking in a troubled nightmare, amid difficulties which were absurd, yet from which she was utterly unable to extricate herself. It seemed to her, at least for the moment, that in all the illimitable universe, limitless as the sky and plain before them, there was truly 'no other girl;' that in some mysterious way, struggle as she might, contemptuous as she might outwardly seem, her fate was irrevocably bound up with his."

Here is a longer and most significant passage from the same story: —

"He threw away his half finished cigar, and placed himself by her side, and they walked up the woodland path that wound round the paddock. George Falaise stood looking at them for a moment as they moved up the path — but only for a moment. Then he turned away and moved towards the seat before the bay-window of the drawing-room — the same seat on which he had sat that first morning when Blanche had come out to him. There he sat down to finish his cigar.

"The winter sun, setting behind the oak woods on the other side of the paddock, cast a kind of false and cold halo over the place where he sat and over the front of the house. He felt deserted and neglected. He hated this man. The cold winter sky, clear and soft and delicate though it was, out of the cloud tissues

of which happy men might weave fairy colored wreaths, seemed to him dun and chill.

. . . . . .

"For about a quarter of an hour perhaps he had sat there. The rhythm of the breeze through the surrounding woods soothed him as did the narcotic influence of his cigar, when the setting sun, just sinking behind the woods, cast a sudden glow of dying brilliancy over the place, and above, over his head, a golden haze of glory spread itself, beneath the rain clouds and the deep winter sky. He looked up suddenly, and they were coming back. He rose, threw away the end of his cigar, and went toward them.

"Damerle evidently had been talking well. Whatever he was he was no hypocrite. Whatever he felt for the moment he really felt. The climate, physical and mental, of Clyston St. Fay affected him, with an intensity which it would not have exerted upon another man less easily affected in other ways. George Falaise even, who felt himself, so to speak, a stranger and a pilgrim everywhere else; to whom this silent village, this home where Blanche lived, was the only spot upon earth, so far as he knew the earth, where he seemed really to breathe — even he did not feel this excited revulsion and contrast of feeling and enthusiasm. Damerle had been speaking of high and sacred things and of the work which lay before them, for the girl's face was flushed, and her whole being and nature seemed instinct with a strange happiness and beauty which was not of earth. Never before, at any time, and most surely never afterwards, did George Falaise see her look like that, — the departing flash of sunset around her, the set purpose of devotion, the glory of

unselfish love, the beauty which God gave to woman, all around her for a moment as they came up the path.

"The angry, disappointed, perturbed spirit left him at this sight. All self-seeking, all self even, was lost in delight. He felt, in spite of himself, a supreme stillness and calm, a sense of result, of something, long wished for, being gained. It is a great mystery why such things are; but to him, to whom so much had been given, had been added also the priceless gift of unselfish love. To what issue can love tend but to the happiness of the loved? The perfect vision that awaits love must surely be this. At this happy moment, as it seems to me, many of us might well envy him; yet at that moment the one thing in the wide universe that was denied him was the one thing upon which his heart was set.

"As they came up the path the sunset glow faded from the sky above, and what a moment before had been a glory of yellow light was now gray and dark. They went back into the house."

A more familiar illustration is in George Meredith's "Richard Feverel," where the great storm scene towards the close of the story develops a new sentiment in the hero and affects profoundly the dramatic situation. Mr. Thomas Hardy, in his pantheistic interpretation of nature, finds it still easier to emphasize the intimate relation of his characters with their natural surroundings,

and over and over again in his novels he has made nature itself take a hand in the evolution of the plot.

"Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of Froom Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready hearts existing there were impregnated by their surroundings."

Tess of the D'Urbervilles.

Determining the incidents. It is even possible to assert that the setting not only affects the situations of the novelist, but that it frequently determines the nature of the incidents that are to take place. This is peculiarly true, of course, in the novels which deal primarily with some occupation or handicraft. But even in novels of adventure, the novelist is compelled by the very force of circumstances to keep close to mere adventure. In a book like "A Gentleman of France" one is tempted to think that anything may happen, but after all only those things may happen there which are pertinent to the road, the camp, or the court during the progress of a particular campaign. In other words, the writer of adventure, who is

apparently enjoying such unhampered freedom, is in reality working within closely drawn lines of limitation; he is bound by the very terms of his implied contract with his readers to supply them with adventure and with little more. We know pretty well, therefore, what is going to happen. It is in novels like "A Nest of Nobles," or "Anna Karénina," or "Adam Bede," or "The Choir Invisible," that we cannot tell what will happen, because anything may happen.

Giving unity to the book.

Finally, it is the setting of a story which often gives the deepest unity to the work as a whole. The setting is used to emphasize the fundamental idea of the book, to accentuate the theme, to bring all the characters of the story into proper perspective. In a railway novel the scream of the whistle may be heard in every chapter. The characters of the story, from the president of a great system down to the humblest employee, all stand in certain definite relations to "the road." It is "the road" which affects their feelings, their ambitions, their actions, and one need not have the anthropomorphic imagination of Zola to conceive of a railway as a monster, either beneficent or ma-

lign, which dominates the individual fate of every personage in such a novel. But in truth it is Zola who has given to our generation the most impressive examples of this myth-making instinct, which gives institutions like the department store, occupations like mining or farming, great campaigns like the Franco-Prussian War, great cities like Rome and Paris, each a personality of its own. In such cases one may freely grant that the setting is distorted, thrown into unnatural proportions, and frequently depicted with a morbid imagination that recalls the worst obsessions of romanticism. Indeed, it is largely because of this element in his work that Zola has been called by many keen critics essentially romantic rather than realistic. But whatever the justice of this criticism, there is no denying that beyond most other novelists of our own day he has succeeded in making the setting of his novels reveal the essential unity of the book. That germinal idea which first stimulated the creative imagination of the author remains with the reader as a haunting impression long after the persons and the action of the tale have faded from the memory.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FICTION–WRITER

"Quelle que soit la formule, il n'y a jamais au fond des œuvres que ce que les hommes y mettent."

F. Brunetière, *Le Roman Naturaliste.*

"Every artist is a thinker, whether he knows it or not; and ultimately no artist will be found greater as an artist than he was as a thinker." David Masson, *British Novelists.*

"There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth."

Henry James, *The Art of Fiction.*

A new phase of the subject.

We are entering once more upon a new phase of our subject. In the last three chapters we have been studying the materials, whether of character or plot or setting, which are at the disposition of the literary artist. We are now to study the use made of these materials by individual men. What we have hitherto done may be likened to an investigation of the general

relations of the art of painting, let us say, to the other arts; then, applying a closer scrutiny, we have watched the various colors upon the palette of the painter, and have noted some of the technical processes by means of which these pigments are utilized. We have now to scrutinize the painter himself.

The man behind the work.

For after all, the use of the materials of any art depends upon the man who employs them. The words of the great French critic, quoted as the first motto for this chapter, have been repeated in various forms by most of the writers who have thought deeply upon the expression of personality by means of art. It is conveyed in the famous formula "Art is a bit of nature seen through a temperament," as well as in the more technical definition of the writer on æsthetics, that the artist is "the middle term between content and expression." Yet this interest in the story-writer himself is a more or less modern factor in the development of fiction. As we recede towards mediæval times, the fascination of the story becomes increasingly dependent upon the tale itself rather than

upon the individuality of the teller; and it is undeniable that the modern interest in literary personality has its seamy side. Personal gossip about famous novelists has often taken the place of real criticism. No details of family history have been considered too sacred to be offered to the public. In an age when a man is scarcely blamed for selling his father's love-letters for hard cash, it is not to be expected that the reading public will respect the reticences and reserves of private life. And one is forced to admit that an acquaintance with a fiction-writer's real experience of men and things, a familiarity with the more marked phases of his career, a knowledge of his friendships and his politics, of the things he hated, of the books he loved, is of great significance in the interpretation of his literary work. One can scarcely understand Balzac's novels without knowing something of Balzac himself; and if, as Hawthorne has reminded us, the details of an author's biography often hide the man instead of revealing him, it is nevertheless true that even in Hawthorne's own case a knowledge of his history affords one of the readiest modes of penetrating to the

essential nature of his productions in literature.

The novelist's experience.

The fiction-writer's use of the materials of his art is conditioned first by his experience. Experience provides the starting point for the work of the constructive imagination; it is a pier sunk into the solid earth from which the arch is sprung into the unknown. Here is a man who professes to interpret life for us. Well, what sort of life has he himself known? What kind of men and women has it been his lot to encounter in his journey through the world? Upon his answer to these questions depends very often his artistic verdict upon life itself; that is, his handling of the elements of character and action in the fictional world of his stories. It must be borne in mind, however, as we have seen in a previous chapter, that extensive experience with men and things is often not so important a factor as intensive experience. "The Story of an African Farm" can be told, provided the writer has insight and imagination, by one who has never left the boundaries of the farm. It is not the number of men and cities which the novelist has seen that counts

so much as do the eyes out of which he has looked and the brain which has reflected upon these observations. For experience at best furnishes suggestions rather than complete details. Said George Eliot: —

"It is invariably the case that when people discover certain points of coincidence in a fiction with facts that happen to have come within their knowledge, they believe themselves able to furnish a key to the whole. That is amusing enough to the author, who knows from what widely sundered portions of experience — from what a combination of subtle, shadowy suggestions, with certain actual objects and events — his story has been formed."

In another of her letters she wrote: —

"There is not a single portrait in 'Adam Bede,' only the suggestions of experience wrought up into new combinations."

The novelist's thought.

Secondly, the fiction-writer's use of the materials of his craft turns upon his thought as well as upon his experience. That is an admirable passage in Professor Masson's book upon "British Novelists:" "Every artist is a thinker, whether he knows it or not; and ultimately no artist will be found greater as an artist than he was as a thinker." Sidney Lanier had this distinction in mind when he said of Edgar

Allan Poe that Poe did not know enough to be a great poet. He did not mean that a man rises in the capacity to produce poetry in accordance with the amount of information he possesses, but rather that one very real test of a poet's greatness is his power to coördinate the results of experience, to reflect upon the diverse phenomena of human life, and to construct, at least to some degree, a philosophical unity from the confused impressions which life offers. Yet the artist's power of thought is but one of the elements by which his work is to be judged. Dickens was surely not a thinker in the sense in which George Eliot was a thinker, nor was Dumas a thinker in the sense in which that word may be applied to Balzac. There is here, as everywhere in the world of art, a variety of equipment and a difference of gifts.

Emotion.

Thirdly, this difference is never more sharply marked than in the varying capacities of different writers for feeling and expressing emotion — emotion called forth by their experience of life and reflection upon its phenomena. With a certain type of fiction-writers, as for instance Trollope,

the capacity for emotion seems to be defective, though this does not prevent admirable work within certain limits. But there is no limitation which more sharply sets the bounds for a man's possible achievement. In other writers, of whom Dickens is the readiest example, we are constantly called upon to observe the evidence of overwrought emotion. Dickens is forever bidding us laugh or cry where Trollope simply asks us to look. Frequently, too, a work of fiction seems to owe its origin to the author's instinctive love or hatred for certain objects. There is where the novel and the eulogy on the one side, and the novel and the satire on the other, touch hands. Here is a striking illustration of hatred furnishing the artistic motive for an extraordinary masterpiece of fiction. Flaubert, writing of his "Madame Bovary," says to a correspondent: —

"They think me in love with the real, whereas I execrate it: it is out of hatred of it that I have undertaken this book. . . . Do you really believe that this mean reality, whose reproduction disgusts you, does not make my gorge rise as much as yours? If you knew me better, you would know that I hold the everyday life in detestation. Personally I have always kept myself as far away from it as I could. But

æsthetically I wanted this time, and only this time, to exhaust it thoroughly."

Imagination.

More significant still is the influence of the artist's imagination upon his use of the materials of his art. It is a kind of resultant of his experience, thought, and emotion. Imagination, in the words of the Century Dictionary, is "The act or power of presenting to consciousness objects other than those directly and at that time produced by the action of the senses." Without attempting any arbitrary classification, we may note that the imagination of the novelist is constantly dealing with two classes of what we agree to call realities, and also with two classes of what are commonly designated as unrealities.

Dealing with realities.

What do we mean by these "realities"? In the first place, the imagination of the story-teller is continually at work in depicting things in the physical world as they are. The objects and events upon which the light of the imagination is turned are brought home to the every-day consciousness of the matter-of-fact reader. Defoe does not meddle in the least with "things as they are;" he contents

himself with painting exact, vivid pictures of them, without seeming to alter his facts by a hair's breadth. He achieves a triumph of the artistic imagination; but it is equally a triumph of that imagination when the artist portrays the work of those spiritual forces which are not to be apprehended by the physical senses. For in dealing with the mysteries of personality, with the profounder forces of the spiritual world, the imagination is penetrating to another and more veritable reality; not what Hawthorne called "the big, solid, tangible unrealities" of the actual world, but that world which is no less eternal for being unseen. I remember hearing a clever woman say of a man who reproached a certain novelist for lack of imagination: "Mr. A. forgets that imagination consists in seeing things as they are, and not as they are not."

Dealing with unrealities.

As for "unrealities," there are two fields where the writer's imagination is called upon to display itself. There is first a mysterious borderland, a shadowy half-world, between the realm of unquestioned spiritual forces and the realm where the fear of superstition holds full sway.

The novelists of the "School of Terror," at the end of the eighteenth century, reveled to their hearts' desires in this ghostly atmosphere of apparitions, portents, spirits, witches, and devils. As mankind advances in intelligence and scientific knowledge, it is constantly reducing the territory of the unknown, beating back this frontier of darkness and evil. Many of the phenomena, however, which in one generation would be accredited to demoniac possession, witchcraft, or the mysterious influence of other personalities, are in a later generation, as the history of hypnotism and telepathy so abundantly proves, capable of scientific demonstration. Such subjects still offer a tempting field, perhaps a field more tempting than ever to the imagination of the fiction-writer; but the theme itself becomes transferred, with the advance of civilization, from the realm of the unreal to the realm of the real. And finally, the imagination frequently exhibits its power in dealing with a second variety of the unreal, namely, the physical world of things as they are *not*. Nothing in the work of Victor Hugo or of Dickens is more impressive and masterful than the "pathetic

fallacy" by means of which they love to distort our vision of the physical world, and seem to make its external phenomena and its secret forces sympathize with the spirit and the fate of their human characters. Such passages do violence, indeed, to the demonstrable truth of fact, but they often succeed in interpreting a higher truth of spiritual emotion, — the "truth of the human heart," which Hawthorne thought it the function of the romancer to express.

The "four stages of fiction."

These illustrations of the four fields in which the imagination displays itself will possibly throw some light upon Mr. Brander Matthews's frequently discussed theory concerning the four stages in the evolution of fiction. He has remarked with indisputable acuteness that the development of fiction has been from "the Impossible to the Improbable, thence to the Probable, and finally to the Inevitable." It is a convenient formula to bear in mind; but one must also remember that fiction displays a constant tendency towards reversion to primitive types, and that in any stage of the development of literature, writers may arise who rely for their power upon

modes of thought and feeling which the race has apparently outgrown.

Limitations of personality. In studying the artistic productiveness of any man, it is necessary to take into account the limitations of his personality. Browning's line, "and thus we half-men struggle," may as pertinently be applied to the novelist as to any other member of the human family. Those limitations of thought, experience, and emotion which have just been discussed, as well as the deficiencies in moral insight which we have still to notice, must always be set down on the debit side of an author's real accomplishment. Even if he have the very highest endowment in the range of activities already indicated, he may lack that final creative impulse, that surplusage of vitality, which drives him to the making of a genuine book.

Limitations of the age. No less sharply defined limitations are to be traced in the influence of the author's generation upon his own productiveness. The history of literature furnishes abundant illustration of authors born out of due time. Matthew Arnold's well known criticism of the poet Gray turns not only upon the fact that Gray "never

spoke out," but upon the causes that underlay this fact; namely, the influence of a prosaic age upon the sensitive mind of the academic poet. There have been many belated romanticists like Cervantes, belated Elizabethans like Charles Lamb, and few of them have been able to say as Lamb did so cheerily: "Hang the age! I'll write for antiquity." It is only a rarely endowed intelligence that is thus able to make its own choice of company. Ordinarily, a man is forced to speak the speech and think the thoughts of his own generation; and a novel-writer, let us say in France, in the full tide of the scientific impulse of the seventies, finds it quite impossible to compose such books as he might have written had he been born in the romantic generation of the thirties.

The novelist's special public.

And every writer, furthermore, has a special public, — provided he be lucky enough to have any public at all, — and this public soon develops a peculiar capacity for requiring from the novelist a certain product, and no other. It is in vain for men like Defoe and Stockton to write books differing essentially from those by

which their first and great reputation was won. Some writers grow cynical under this enforced duty to produce a single kind of composition, and it has not infrequently happened that while the author's popular reputation has been sustained by works which he himself views in the light of "pot-boilers" pure and simple, he has found his deepest artistic satisfaction in producing a limited amount of work appealing to the most fastidious taste. There died not long ago a German artist who supported his family by painting comic little cherubic nudities, and satisfied his real artistic cravings, meantime, by painting crucifixions which the public never cared to buy. This is only an extreme instance of a distinction which affects more or less directly the output of every novelist who works for the public. After he has become widely known, there is a definite commercial demand that he should turn out work in a particular vein, and he departs from it at his peril. Thackeray is not the only famous British novelist who has complained of the limitations enforced by the British Public upon the free presentation of the facts of life. Yet it is

doubtless better that the British Public should warn a novelist that he must not trespass upon a certain territory, than that it should order him to confine himself to questionable topics if he would satisfy the popular taste. After all, those writers are not the least fortunate who, like Jane Austen and Oliver Goldsmith, have written masterpieces and quietly put them away in the drawer, leaving it to others, after an interval of years, to discover that these productions were masterpieces. No doubt it seemed at the moment as if "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "Pride and Prejudice" represented wasted time and effort. But work done in this tranquil fashion is often surer of immortality than the novel which is "syndicated" from one end of the country to the other.

The novelist's philosophy.

The work of the novelist is very directly affected by his philosophy of life. Yet it is by no means necessary that he should be conscious of the view of the world which he in reality maintains. Here and there, indeed, there have been memorable examples of a novelist writing to illustrate, or to reduce to absurdity, some philosophical theory of the universe. Voltaire's "Can-

dide" was written to ridicule the "whatever is, is right" theory, made famous by Leibnitz, Bolingbroke, and Pope. In Turgenieff's novels there is a tolerably complete exposition of political and philosophical nihilism. The philosophical theory of pessimism has never been more brilliantly exemplified than in the novels of Flaubert, and the middle and later stories of George Eliot drew much of their inspiration from the tendencies of positivism and agnosticism. These writers are all what Professor Masson would classify as "thought men" rather than "fact men." If they may not all have been able to pass an academic examination in the history of philosophy, each of them had a more or less distinct theory of the scheme of human life and its relations, or lack of relations, to the unseen world of spirit.

His practical doctrine.

It frequently happens that novelists who have troubled themselves very little with philosophical theories and generalizations about human life have nevertheless with a fine unconsciousness delivered themselves clearly as to the meaning of life. Scott teaches us to be brave, Kingsley to be manly, Dickens to be kind. Mr. Henry

James instructs us that life is an art, and that to play the game properly requires infinite finesse. Such writers may not realize precisely the impression which they have conveyed. They do betray, however, consciously or unconsciously, the view of life which they have formed. They "give themselves away," not necessarily in any one book, nor in the productions of any one phase of their creative activity, but rather in the totality of their work. It is as impossible to mistake the every-day temper, the moral attitude of a writer who has expressed himself in a dozen books, as it would be to misunderstand entirely his action and his motives if we were to watch him through a dozen years of his life.

"Art and morals."

In discussing the ethical aim of the fiction-writer, we trench upon the ground of the old debate concerning art and morality. Has art — the sphere of æsthetic enjoyment — anything at all to do with morals — the sphere of conduct? If these two fields do touch each other, what is the nature of their relations? These questions have been asked and answered

more insistently and more bitterly concerning fiction than any other of the arts.

The artist is a human being.

Let us begin by endeavoring to trace the connection between the general moral attitude of the novelist and his excellence in his profession. We have already quoted the definition of art: "A bit of nature seen through a temperament." It is true that this definition emphasizes but a single function of the artist's complex task, yet that function is an essential one. The artist's own personality is as it were the crucible through which the "bit of nature" — the material for art — must pass in order to be changed into the work of art. Whatever affects personality, therefore, instantly and inevitably affects the work upon which the artist is engaged. Now sin is the negation of personality. It turns a man into a brute. It minimizes the life of the spirit, until the spiritual faculties disappear. Nobody denies this. The artist is a man like the rest of us. He is a moral being, and running the same moral risks as you and I, and presumably greater risks, owing to his finer organization. To say that his personality is not affected by the morality or im-

morality of his life is to place the artist outside the pale of humanity. It is to deny him the very attributes that make him a man. To declare that an artist's art is in exact ratio with the morality of his private life would be an exaggeration, yet it would probably be nearer the truth than to say that his life and his art are wholly unrelated quantities.

Labor itself a moral factor.

We should note that the honest labor of the artist is in itself a moral factor. We who are inclined to look merely at the finished art product, and not into the workshop where the product is wrought, are constantly tempted to underrate the moral qualities which the excellent workman must possess. One of the most suggestive passages in Ruskin's lecture on "Art and Morals" is this: —

"The day's work of a man like Mantegna or Paul Veronese consists of an unfaltering, uninterrupted succession of movements of the hand more precise than those of the finest fencer: the pencil leaving one point and arriving at another, not only with unerring precision at the extremity of the line, but with an unerring and yet varied course — sometimes over spaces a foot or more in extent — yet a course so determined everywhere that either of these men could, and Veronese often does, draw a finished profile, or any other portion of

the contour of a face, with one line, not afterwards changed. Try, first, to realize to yourselves the muscular precision of that action, and the intellectual strain of it; for the movement of a fencer is perfect in practiced monotony; but the movement of the hand of a great painter is at every instant governed by direct and new intention. Then imagine that muscular firmness and subtlety; and that instantaneously selective and ordinant energy of the brain, sustained all day long, not only without fatigue, but with a visible joy in the exertion, like that which an eagle seems to take in the wave of his wings; and this all life long, and through long life, not only without failure of power, but with visible increase of it, until the actually organic changes of old age. And then consider, so far as you know anything of physiology, what sort of an ethical state of body and mind that means! — ethic through ages past! what fineness of race there must be to get it, what exquisite balance and symmetry of the vital powers! And then, finally, determine for yourselves whether a manhood like that is consistent with any viciousness of soul, with any mean anxiety, any gnawing lust, any wretchedness of spite or remorse, any consciousness of rebellion against law of God or man, or any actual, though unconscious, violation of even the least law to which obedience is essential for the glory of life, and the pleasing of its Giver."

What Ruskin, with characteristic eloquence has here said of the painter is scarcely less true of the novelist. A task honestly undertaken, patiently carried through, is in itself

a bit of morality. There is something very fine in Emile Zola's steady devotion, for twenty long years, to a single artistic plan: the completion of the Rougon-Macquart series of novels. Fifteen hundred words a morning, every morning in the week, every week for twenty years; no wonder M. Zola bears the worn, tired, patient face of the worker. Even though the Rougon-Macquart series proves, as time goes by, to have been a huge blunder, this does not lessen one's respect for such an example of fidelity to an imagined duty.

"Laborare est orare."

Fidelity to such a duty is of course a very different thing from the religious consecration which made Fra Angelico breathe a prayer whenever he lifted his brush. "He who has not art," says Goethe, in a tone of Olympian condescension, "let him have religion." But Fra Angelico's painting was no worse for his preliminary prayer. The religious nature has often enough found a supreme expression through the arts. In a very true sense a man's art may be his religion, and where the religious element seems left out of an artist's nature, the great world's verdict commonly is that there is a defect in that man's art.

Witness the plays and poems of the Olympian Goethe himself.

A complete man.

In all this I am simply claiming that the novelist, like the poet or the painter, should be as far as possible a complete man. A defective moral organization, a deficient spirituality, will in the long run count as surely against him as a dull wit or a clumsy hand.

Immorality and technique.

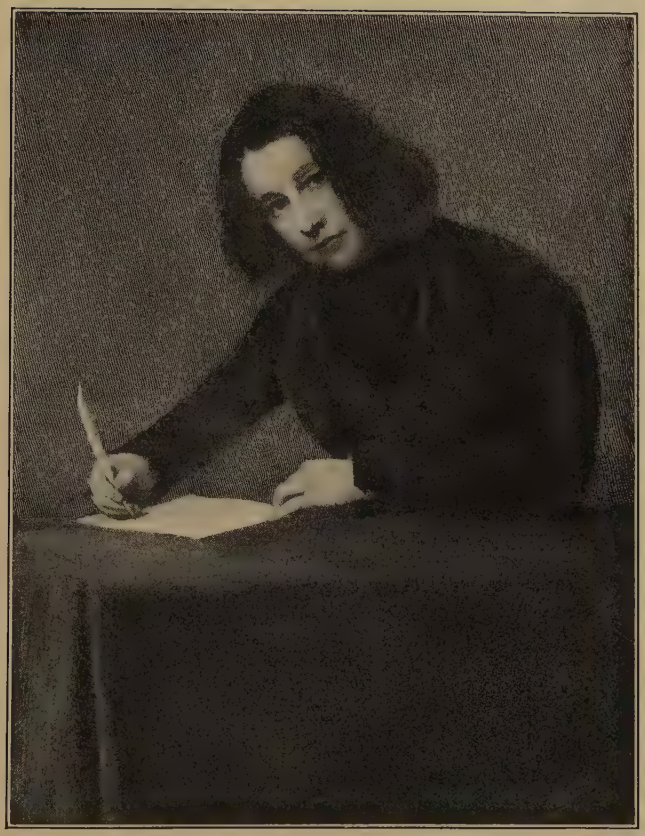
But precisely how does an artist's immorality affect his work? George Eliot's dictum that "A filthy mind makes filthy art" is doubtless sound, but it does not explain the process in question. We must look for the results of immoral conduct at the point where the specific immorality affects the artist's handling of the medium in which he works. One may declare with absolute confidence that Paderewski is neither a drunkard nor an opium-eater; if he were, it would be physically impossible for him to retain his marvelously perfect control over the muscles of his fingers. He might perhaps be a miser or a thief without affecting his technique as a pianist; but no miser or thief ever had the freedom and serenity of mind which are essential for the composition of

great music. Benvenuto Cellini was a notorious liar, sensualist, and murderer; yet as a silversmith and designer he was one of the most admirable workmen of the Renaissance. Here one may perhaps say that the effect of Benvenuto's immoralities was negative; if he had not been so bad a man, he might have cared to attempt some of the more noble tasks to which contemporary artists devoted themselves. In Browning's poem, theft and treachery clip the wings of Andrea del Sarto's imagination, although he remains, as he was before his sin, the "faultless" painter. Such discussions turn largely upon the importance assigned to the element of technique in assessing the value of an artist's work. The more stress laid on technique the less important does the question of morality become, unless immorality results in actual unsteadiness of eye or hand.

The general law.

Or, to put the matter a little differently, we may say that the moral element enters into every art in proportion as that art touches human life and character. All the arts, indeed, group themselves about human life, but they do not all stand towards life upon terms of equal intimacy. A

mediæval sculptor, chiseling grotesque gargoyles for the eaves of a cathedral, is working in a realm of art pretty thoroughly removed from human life and character. So is an impressionist landscape painter who is striving merely to reproduce, as cleverly as may be, certain color tones; or a composer of old-fashioned Italian opera, basing artificial melodies upon the echoes of artificial feeling. Such artistic activities as these may be compared with Cellini's exquisite cutting of cameos; if the workman's hand and eye retain their normal power, his goodness or badness of heart is a matter of secondary concern. But in the composition of great music, or great poetry, or great fiction, mere manual dexterity occupies a subordinate place. The interpretation of life and character becomes now the artist's all-important task, and a characterless, conscienceless man has no apparatus wherewith to decipher character and conscience. He cannot interpret what he cannot comprehend. The old argument of Quintilian that the good orator must be a good man — an argument that has never been successfully controverted — holds with equal force in the realm of fiction. A



Charles Rebell

bad man cannot become a great novelist. He might write excellent short stories; he might even compose an excellent romance of incident and adventure; but he could not write "The Newcomes," or "David Copperfield," or "The Antiquary." The novel would be beyond him.

Allowances to be made.

In all this we must bear in mind, however, that we are dealing with relative rather than with absolute values. The possession of rare literary gifts is no warrant that the possessor is superior to the weaknesses and vices of his own time, or of his own individual nature. There is a great deal of nonsense written about "the artistic temperament" and the allowances that must be made for it. Yet the fact remains that the professional artist has usually been a somewhat specialized product of society. In the case of the double hydrangea, as of many other cultivated plants, beauty has been developed at the expense of fertility; this hydrangea does not bear fruit like the other members of the family of plants to which it belongs; it fulfills its purpose by performing the new function of producing beautiful flowers alone. By a similar analogy, we

are inclined to make certain allowances for "genius," that is, for extraordinary endowments of special capacity. As with a soldier drafted for service, society tacitly excuses the man of genius from some of the civic duties and civic virtues. If he takes advantage of this freedom, however, we may be sure that he and his work pay due penalty. We may not be able to appreciate either the force of his temptations or the degree of his repentance; we do not know, as Burns has pathetically reminded us, "what's resisted." It is enough to remember that in a world of erring men and women the "artist" has his share of human weakness and struggle, and that in the presence of such mysteries as "sin" and "personality" and "creative power" — all of which are involved in this discussion — it is safer to avoid dogmatic generalizations.

The moral influence of the work itself: it should be judged as a whole

When we pass from the moral attitude of the artist to the moral influence of the concrete work of art, we are upon somewhat surer ground. It is easier here to ascertain the facts, and to base one's judgment upon a

wide comparison of experiences. We should note, for instance, that the influence of a book should be estimated by its effect as a whole, rather than by this or that detail. To select a familiar instance, it has frequently been pointed out that the sexual morality of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" is superficial, pagan, or bad, but yet that the influence of the book as a whole has been helpful to countless readers. There are some indecencies in Shakespeare's plays, and there is occasional grossness in Fielding's novels; but to emphasize such blemishes, and dwell upon them as if indecency and grossness were the characteristic qualities of Shakespeare and Fielding, is wholly to miss the splendid radiance, the robust humanity of these authors.

And by artistically trained minds.

Furthermore, a work of art, whether painting, or statue, or novel, should be judged by artistically trained minds. Only such minds can determine the character of the work; can interpret the conventional language which the artist is forced to use. Artistic discipline alone, as sculptors find it necessary to remind us, can teach us to distinguish the

nude from the naked, the undraped from the undressed. The vast majority of cultivated persons, in all civilized countries, feel that the undraped statue of the Venus of Melos, by its own inherent qualities, prohibits its indecent suggestion. If here and there some excellent person is to be found declaring that this statue is improper, the prudishness is not so much a sign of finer moral feeling as of defective æsthetic discipline. There are plenty of novels that frankly appeal to prurient and depraved taste, but before condemning, on moral grounds, a novel which has given delight to generations of mature readers, it is wiser to ascertain whether we have perceived the author's point of view and properly interpreted his intention. There is rude common sense in Professor Raleigh's[1] blunt declaration "Books are written to be read by those who can understand them; their possible effect on those who cannot is a matter of medical rather than of literary interest."

"One man's meat."

This will serve to remind us of the homely and useful proverb that "One man's meat is another man's poison."

[1] *The English Novel*, p. 171.

In feeding the mind as well as in feeding the body, it must be remembered that the same stimulus produces in different people very different reactions. There is such a thing as dissolute music, but a musical ear and some degree of musical training is necessary in order to perceive it. Of two persons equally responsive to the appeal of music, and listening to the overture to "Tannhäuser," the "Venusberg motif" will run riot in the mind of one, and the "Pilgrims' Chorus motif" solemnize and uplift the other. Both hearers are listening to the same orchestra, but they are hearing and dreaming different things. There are pages of fiction which to some readers seem written in letters of fire, so glowing is their passion, so intense the subtle suggestions of the text; to other readers — or to these same readers ten years afterwards — those magic pages seem gray and cold. In all imaginative art the spectator, the listener, the reader, plays an active as well as a passive rôle; he too must become for the moment a creator, a "maker;" he lives, in a very true sense, in that imaginary world; and the forms and potencies thus created by the reciprocal activity of the

writer and the reader are as various and as little capable of rigid classification as are the infinite varieties of individual human character.

Sexual morality not the sole morality to be considered.

Most discussions of the morals of fiction drift back to the single question of sexual morality. No one who believes that "morality is the core of life," and recognizes the profound influence of sexual instinct in the actual ordering of human institutions, will quarrel with this tendency to scrutinize closely all that a novel may portray of the relations of the sexes. Yet such a scrutiny is apt to overlook the fact that it deals with but a single phase of morals. There are many other things that count, both in the business of this world and in the preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven. There are thousands of good people who are shocked — as perhaps they ought to be — by a story that describes in plain terms the yielding of a young man to sexual temptation, but who are not shocked in the least by a story that glorifies brute force, sings the praise of war, and teaches that for the individual or the nation it is might that makes right. Yet

which of these stories is really the more immoral? Which is more dangerous to the life of the Republic?

Specific moral purpose.

Another aspect of fiction, very frequently discussed, but never, in the nature of the case, capable of absolute, dogmatic statement, is suggested by the question of specific moral purpose. When a novelist sits down to write a story, should he have a specific moral intention? Mrs. Stowe is supposed to have had such a purpose in writing "Uncle Tom's Cabin," — to further the cause of abolition; Dickens in writing "Nicholas Nickleby," — to drive such schools as Dotheboys Hall out of existence; Mrs. Humphry Ward in writing "Robert Elsmere," — to preach Elsmerianism; and Miss Sewell in writing "Black Beauty," — to make people kind to their horses. Granting that these causes were praiseworthy, are the novels any better or greater because they were inspired by a definite moral purpose? Before I attempt to answer this question, two admissions should be made, one regarding the nature of fine art, and the other concerning the facts of literary history.

Fine art has no practical end.

We must admit that fine art, as such, has no practical end whatever. The pleasures which it affords are disinterested pleasures; it creates for us an object for delighted contemplation, nothing more. Its divorce from the world of action is absolute. And prose fiction belongs generically — in its highest reaches, at least — to the fine arts. The instant, therefore, that a work of fiction proposes as its end a definite action which is to be brought about through its influence — such as the acceptance of some creed, the reform of an abuse, the marshaling of certain social forces against other social forces — at that instant it ceases to be legitimate artistic fiction. It may be eloquent oratory, or clever pamphleteering, or effective sermonizing, but it is not the fine art of fiction any longer.

But fiction is not "unmoral."

The other admission, which apparently contradicts the first, is that as a matter of fact the "moral purpose" men have frequently written better novels than the "art for art's sake" men. In the words of Bernard Bosanquet, "History shows that hazardous to art as the didactic spirit is, the mood of great masters

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in great art epochs is nearer to the didactic spirit than to the conscious quest for abstract beauty."[1] The explanation is, I suppose, that the "moral purpose" men have on the whole been greater men, more adequately endowed in sympathy and imagination; and since prose fiction is more intimately concerned with human life and character than most of the other fine arts, this fuller endowment of moral sympathy has added a richness and vitality to the work of the "moral purpose" men. Art, as such, is indeed "unmoral;" an Indian basket, a Greek vase, a Morris wall-paper design, a Persian rug, are neither moral nor immoral. But to expect that a novelist can tell us the story of Arthur Dimmesdale or Arthur Pendennis or Arthur Donnithorne, and preserve the unmoral aloofness of the designer of a rug, is to fly in the face of the history of literature. The novelist is a man, and the men and women he describes are not alien to him. "Sunt lachrymæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt."

The novel with a purpose.

Let us now return to our question about the novel with a specific moral purpose. Is it likely to be

[1] Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 227.

on that account the better novel? The chances are that it is not. If it has subordinated artistic considerations to the exigencies of some ethical doctrine, it commonly pays the penalty. Tolstoi's "Resurrection" is a sermon; its point will disappear with the changes in Russian society; his "Anna Karénina" remains an enduring work of art. The "novel with a purpose" has often had the instantaneous influence, the wide currency of a pamphlet, but in a few years it shares the pamphlet's fate. The "novel of the season" is not the novel of the generations. The cleverness of its adjustment to the popular feeling or fad of the hour makes it all the more hopelessly outlawed when that hour is past. A "Pride and Prejudice," written for sheer love of the writing, is surer of finding readers after another hundred years than any "novel with a purpose" in our literature.

Moral passion has a place in the novel.

But is moral earnestness, then, to be forbidden to the novelist? Have indignation against injustice, sympathy with the down-trodden, high ardor for human progress, and passion for the truth at whatever cost no place in the novel?

Have Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Sand, Turgenieff, Daudet, no righteous indignation, no strenuous moral passion? To ask such a question is to answer it. But these great artists in fiction used their indignation and sympathy and zeal for human welfare as they used any other materials of their art. The artist in them — save in rare exceptions — controlled and directed the reformer. They wrote stories of human life, not merely tracts for the times. There is not in modern English poetry a profounder moral insight, a nobler spiritual aspiration, than in Tennyson's "Palace of Art." It affects the religious emotions more than a dozen sermons; yet it is not a sermon. It is a poem. The poet and not the preacher has held captive the ear and the soul; we are moved to the very depths of our nature, but we are not exhorted to go forth and accomplish a specific task. "The Palace of Art" is not a purposeless poem, but neither is it a "poem with a purpose;" and the creative power which used the elements of intellectual and moral passion in building "The Palace of Art" is the same power that wrought "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Bride of Lammer-

moor" and "Henry Esmond." In prose fiction, at least, if not always in the other arts, the laws of beauty sink deep into the structure of human life, and a novel that utilizes the deepest and strongest instincts of the heart is not the less likely, on that account, to possess consummate and enduring beauty.

The profession of moral purpose.

If, as I have tried to indicate, the presence of a specific purpose is usually a detriment to the artistic quality of a novel, it follows that the author's profession of a definite moral purpose is quite gratuitous. The eighteenth century men, with scarcely an exception, made the "moral purpose" plea in their prefaces. It became as conventional as the earlier dedication to a patron. Defoe did it, but we know that that imperturbable liar wrote to sell. Richardson claimed that his object in writing fiction was "to promote the cause of religion and virtue." Fielding gravely advertised himself as a "faithful historian of human nature." But readers of "Clarissa Harlowe" and "Tom Jones" heed very little what the prefaces say about the author's motive for composition. In practical life we distrust a man who talks much about the good influ-

ence which he is trying to exert; and the great public cares absolutely nothing about what the author believes to have been his purpose in writing. It cares only for what he has expressed in his book, and the novelists who write magazine articles and give lectures in order to explain their intentions would do well to profit by Goethe's advice to "create and not talk," — "Bilde, Künstler, rede nicht."

The novelist's artistic aim.

The total impression made by any work of fiction cannot be rightly understood without a sympathetic perception of the artistic aim of the writer. Consciously or unconsciously, he has accepted certain facts, and rejected or suppressed other facts, in order to give unity to the particular aspect of human life which he is depicting. No novelist possesses the impartiality, the indifference, the infinite tolerance, of nature. Nature displays to us, with an inveterate unconcern, the beautiful and the ugly, the precious and the trivial, the chaste and the obscene. If you lift up your eyes on a spring morning, you will see the bluebird flashing in the sun; but beneath your feet there may be miry ways and the foul winter's refuse

which nature, careless housekeeper, has not yet troubled herself to put decently out of sight. And a writer must choose whether he will look up or down; he must select the particular aspects of nature and human nature which are demanded by his work in hand. A perfectly faithful "transcript of life" he cannot make, not even if he is a Shakespeare; he is forced to select, to combine, to create. Stevenson wrote, in a characteristic passage: —

"Our art is occupied, and bound to be occupied, not so much in making stories true as in making them typical; not so much in capturing the lineaments of each fact, as in marshalling all of them towards a common end. For the welter of impressions, all forcible but all discreet, which life presents, it substitutes a certain artificial series of impressions, all indeed most feebly represented, but all aiming at the same effect, all eloquent of the same idea, all chiming together like consonant notes in music, or like the graduated tints in a good picture. From all its chapters, from all its sentences, the well-written novel echoes and reëchoes its own creative and controlling thought; to this must every incident and character contribute; the style must have been pitched in unison with this; and if there is anywhere a word that looks another way, the book would be stronger, clearer, and (I had almost said) fuller without it." *The Art of Fiction.*

Stevenson loved a paradox, and undoubtedly emphasized the principle of conscious artistic selection more than most men of his craft. It is enough, perhaps, for us to recognize that a selection of some sort must be made. Alike in the fairy stories of Hans Christian Andersen, the story for "the young person" by Frank Stockton, and the grossly naturalistic books of those novelists who "see the hog in nature and henceforth take nature for the hog," there is a deliberate suppression of whole departments of thought and feeling, there is the building up of a new world, which may be, according to the artist's choice, better or worse than the actual world, but which is in any case different.

The instinct for beauty.

This selection of subject, of material, is accompanied by a kindred instinct for the choice of form. Romantic and naturalistic epochs furnish constant illustration of the preference of content to form, of the desire to secure, at any price, the emotions of surprise and of recognition. But no epoch in the history of fiction is without illustration of the opposite tendency; namely, to subordinate the element of content to that of form, to secure "effect" through symbols

rather than by representation of objects. One sort of "effectivism" is as vicious as the other. The fiction that has yielded pleasure to generations of readers is that which reveals a deep synthesis of form and content, a fusion of those two elements that enter into the work of art. Such a synthesis must be traced back to the writer's spontaneous instinct. It is a process antedating the conscious choice of words, the conscious selection of this or that literary formula. After all, a man is born εὐφυής — with a beautiful, fair-proportioned mind — or he is not. Scott and Jane Austen and Hawthorne were εὐφυής, and their books reveal it. The desire to make beautiful things was an integral part of their personalities; and in such things, in spite of every difference in training and method and outward circumstance, was the true life of their spirits.

CHAPTER IX

REALISM

"Realism: the representation of what is real in fact . . . according to actual truth or appearance, or to intrinsic probability, without selection or preference over the ugly of what is beautiful or admirable; opposed to idealism and romanticism. . . .

"The observation of things as they are, . . . and the consequent faculty of reproducing them with approximate fidelity."

Century Dictionary.

"Courbet was the first or among the first to feel the interest and importance of the actual world as it is and for what it is, rather than for what it suggests."

W. C. Brownell, *French Art.*

The need of defining "realism."

We are to discuss in this chapter a somewhat difficult theme, — one that has long occupied the attention of the reading public, and about which all the critics, and indeed most of the novelists, have at one time or another had their say. No term dealing with literary methods has been more current than "realism," and there is none that needs a more exact analysis. In connection with all the fine arts the word "realism" is used, but we do not

always use it in the same sense. In criticising works of art the term is employed with at least four distinct shades of meaning.

As opposed to conventionalism.

First, we speak of realism as opposed to conventionalism. In decorative work, for instance, there is usually no attempt to represent any particular flower or tree, but simply to repeat a conventional pattern. But if in the carvings around a cathedral door we find among the conventional trefoils and dragons an effort to represent an actual plant or animal of that neighborhood, we speak of the "realism" of the mediæval sculptor. In like manner, when the early Greek sculptors abandoned the stiff, purely conventional drapery that fell in wooden folds from the shoulders of men and women alike, and endeavored to give the effect of the actual garments then worn by the two sexes, it was, to that extent, a realistic movement, though of course very far removed from the painstaking labor of the modern sculptor to represent real lace and real buttonholes.

As opposed to idealism.

Secondly, we speak of realism in distinction from idealism, meaning

by idealism the "effort to realize the highest type of any natural object by eliminating all its imperfect elements, — representing nature as she might be." Rosa Bonheur buys a horse, stables it next her studio, and paints it to the life. On the other hand, Regnault's "Automedon taming the Horses of Achilles" is said to have called forth this comment from two visitors: "You never saw horses like those!" "No," said the other, "but I have been looking for them for forty years!" Rosa Bonheur's horse is more realistically painted; there is less idealism than in the horses of Regnault. Or, to take perhaps a better example, the Sistine Madonna is thought by many critics to be an idealization of a certain portrait by Raphael in the Pitti Palace at Florence. The slyness, the sensuality, has been taken out of the face, the features have been made more regular, the expression wonderfully purified, ennobled; the same woman is back of both pictures, but we speak of the "realism" of the Florence portrait, while the Sistine Madonna is so little of a portrait, is so idealized, that it becomes for most people a type of the Divine Motherhood.

As opposed to the imaginative.

In the third place, we talk of the realistic as opposed to the imaginative. Michelangelo took an extraordinary interest in anatomy, and was never weary of displaying his knowledge of the human figure. He has exhibited this knowledge, with equal mastery, let us say in his "Soldiers Bathing," and in the "Adam" of the Sistine Chapel, who stretches forth his hand to receive a living soul from the Creator. Both are admirable studies from the undraped figure, but the Sistine picture is infinitely more than that; it is a superb conception, a triumph of the imagination; and we mark this difference when we speak of the strong, healthy, admirable realism of the bathing soldiers. A cognate, although somewhat different, illustration may be drawn from the sphere of poetry. The "History of Dr. Faustus," which gave Marlowe the basis for his play, contains this description of the apparition of Helen of Troy: —

"This lady appeared before them in a most rich gown of purple velvet, costly embroidered; her hair hanging down loose, as fair as the beaten gold, and of such length that it reached down to her hams, having most amorous coal-black eyes, a sweet and

pleasant round face, with lips as red as any cherry; her cheeks of a rose-colour, her mouth small, her neck white like a swan; tall and slender of personage; in sum, there was no imperfect place in her; she looked round about her with a roling hawke's eye, a smiling and wanton countenance."

We are told the texture and color of her robe, the length of her hair, the shape of her face, the peculiarities of her features; it is an effort at realistic description; but note how the poet, with one beat of his pinions, rises into the realm of the imagination, and describes by refraining from description: —

> "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

As opposed to sentimentalism.

Lastly, it is customary, in speaking of the fine arts, to use the term "realism" in contradistinction to sentimentalism. We have this contrast in mind when we put French painters in the days of Louis XV., men like Watteau, Fragonard, Van Loo, with their charming artificiality, their delicate and impossible combinations of Cupids and fountains and lawn-parties, over against the Dutchmen who were painting, as honestly as they knew how, what Ruskin superciliously calls "fat cattle and ditchwater." We are conscious of the

same contrast in poetry when we turn from "Childe Harold" to "Don Juan," from Keats's "Endymion" to Crabbe's "Tales of the Hall," from Rossetti's "Sister Helen" to Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," or from Tennyson's "Gardener's Daughter" to his "Rizpah."

Popular conceptions of realism in fiction.

It will thus be seen that when we attribute realism to a work of art, we by no means always use the word with the same signification. It would be hazardous to assert that the four uses I have illustrated — namely, as in opposition to conventionalism, to idealism, to the imaginative, and to sentimentalism — exhaust the possible meanings of the term. Realism in fiction may mean realism in any of the senses applicable to the fine arts. And furthermore, as the result of the discussions of the art of fiction which have been waged so continuously and on every hand for the past twenty years, there have been developed in the public mind three distinct conceptions of what constitutes realism in fiction. Let us note them carefully.

Copying actual facts.

Perhaps the most wide-spread of these popular conceptions is this:

that realism in fiction consists in copying actual facts. In the figure of speech most often employed, the realist is a photographer. He sets up his camera in front of you, without saying "By your leave," or "Now, a pleasant expression, please," and he takes you. His grocer has a peculiar way of tying up a package, his mother-in-law a trick of lifting her left eyebrow; the indefatigable realist secures a negative of each. He can do likewise with a railroad train, a line of bricklayers, the side elevation of a tenement house, or a landscape. Once let him master the mechanical process, and the world becomes an infinity of potential plates. Those to whom this metaphor of photography seems too mechanical have another word to represent the copying of actual facts, the word "transcribe." Realism means a "transcript of life" as it passes before you. "You cannot take too many notes," says Henry James; "the human documents" are the all-important thing, cry the French writers.

Deliberate choice of the commonplace.

The second popular conception of the realistic method is that it does not photograph or transcribe all the facts, but that it makes a deliberate

choice of the commonplace. The "Boston Herald" remarked, during one of the high tides of American realism: "In the bright lexicon of the new school of fiction the uninteresting means interesting, and persons having any particular strength of character are useful only as foils for the flaccid and colorless." As a less pungent but perfectly fair statement of the point at issue, I will quote from a personal letter of a professional musician, a pupil of Liszt, and himself a thorough romanticist.

"It seems to me that all art should idealize, and should select for embodiment characters and incidents which are raised by some unusual, inherent quality above the level of common every-day life, which we all experience *ad nauseam*. They need not be less realistic. The diamond is as real a natural product as a lump of coal; it is simply less common, more beautiful and valuable. I am aware that it is considered to-day the highest praise with a certain class of readers and critics, to pronounce a book strictly "true to life," by which is meant the every-day life of all. It seems to me it is better to take these experiences first-hand, in the original, as they come to us all in plenty, and to seek in literature for those equally real but rarer experiences, only found in the exceptional moments and in meeting exceptional characters; experiences with the higher, intenser phases of life, not so readily obtain-

able elsewhere. I am well aware that these views are only those of the school to which I, as artist, naturally belong, and realize that you have the fullest right to adhere to the other."

I shall refer again to this extract from the musician's letter, and will ask the reader now simply to note the phrase "the every-day life of all," to the representation of which, he says, the "falsely called realistic school" devote themselves. In "the every-day life of all" there are a hundred chances to one that the horse does not run away, that the house does not burn down, that the long-lost will does not tumble out of the secret drawer. Therefore, as Mr. Howells has triumphantly argued, fiction should not concern itself with the hundredth chance, but with the ninety-nine: it should make deliberate choice of the commonplace.

The "unpleasant."

The third of the current conceptions is not originally based upon the fiction of the Anglo-Saxon race, but has been imported from the continent, together with the books that have given rise to it. According to this conception, realism in fiction is synonymous with the "unpleasant." It deals with objects and relations which by

the common consent of well bred people are tabooed in conversation. Its material may be that which is physically repellent, or that which offends the moral sense, or very likely a combination of them both; and the prevailing British — and to some extent the American — opinion about this phase of realistic fiction is vigorously and exhaustively, though not very poetically, expressed in the line of Tennyson's second "Locksley Hall" about "maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism." It is to be noted that this conception of realism, like the preceding one, is based upon the writer's choice of material rather than upon his method. We shall see later that it is quite possible for a novelist like Stevenson to select romantic material, but to depict it with realistic technique.

These are not misconceptions.

I should by no means wish to assert that these three wide-spread conceptions of the realistic novel are necessarily misconceptions. Notable fiction has been produced by the method of copying actual facts. The human spectacle is one of extraordinary interest and variety,

and the hand can be taught a high degree of skill in copying, or transcribing, those facts that are apparent to the senses. It can never be taught an absolute skill; a man is not a machine — a camera raised to the *n*th power — though he may try to make himself think that he is. However faithfully he may attempt to copy the facts before him, some of them will escape him. All unconsciously he selects, modifies, adjusts; the camera has a greater fidelity, a more perfect impartiality, than the man; and yet somehow the man's work is better than the camera's. In other words, the subjective element, which enters necessarily into every product of man's artistic effort, however persistently the artist tries to exclude it, is precisely the element that gives the highest value to art, that gives it enduring significance as the record of the human spirit. And nevertheless, as to excel in some forms of athletics a man must turn himself into an animal for the time being and renounce his higher faculties, so nothing is more common than to see the artist in fiction pride himself mainly upon his lower gift, his manual dexterity. In pursuance of this theory of his own powers, or

a theory as to the limited province of his art, he may nevertheless do remarkable and valuable work on the level to which he restricts himself. The Dutch painters may have renounced the things of the spirit, — which are no doubt difficult to paint, — but they rendered their "fat cattle and ditchwater" with an accuracy and a sympathy that are worthy of high praise; and it is in similar fashion that notable fiction has been produced by the method of copying actual facts, or by the allied method of selecting for representation certain facts which are uncompromisingly commonplace. Both these methods are properly enough called realistic; and it is also impossible to refuse that term to novels dealing with what we have called "unpleasant" phases of life. There are sensitive, highly cultivated people who cannot read books like "Anna Karénina" or "Madame Bovary," but it is idle to deny that these great books are realistic in method and that they are masterpieces of art.

Is an inclusive definition possible?

The three conceptions of realism, then, are not misconceptions; but they are partial conceptions if they are exclusive of one another. Is it possible

to find a definition which shall include them all? By taking a hint from Hawthorne's well known distinction between the romance and the novel, I think we may get this negative definition of realism in fiction: *It is that fiction which lacks the romantic atmosphere.* But it may be objected that "romantic atmosphere" is a somewhat vague term, and that it implies a preliminary discussion of romanticism. Here, then, is a more positive, working definition: *Realistic fiction is that which does not shrink from the commonplace* (although art dreads the commonplace) *or from the unpleasant* (although the aim of art is to give pleasure) *in its effort to depict things as they are, life as it is.*

The live eagle.

Let me illustrate. I want, let us say, a live eagle for a pet. Now a live eagle is not an altogether pleasant thing to have in the house. I know beforehand that an eagle does not dine on bonbons; there will be dried blood upon its beak, and filth upon its feathers, and the odor of carrion about its claws. A stuffed eagle would be for many reasons far nicer: an eagle carefully skinned, deodorized, and mounted, with insect powder in his plumage and varnish on

his legs, and a pair of glass eyes. A stuffed eagle would be more artistic, would be more of an ornament to the library, would give more pleasure to one's friends, would be much safer for the children. Nevertheless, I am perverse enough to say, "I don't want a stuffed eagle; I want a live one." And I have a right to choose the kind of eagle I prefer.

Choosing the fiction one wants.

Is it not just like that in the matter of fiction? I claim for myself, or for any one else, the privilege of saying to a novel-writer: "I am eager to know more about life. Literature, you say, is the interpretation of life. Therefore, by means of your art, interpret life to me. Only I am tired to-day — perhaps I may have been for many days — of reading about life as it used to be in the sixteenth century, or life as it is going to be in the twenty-first, or life as some one thinks it ought to be to-day; tell me, you who have the eye and the tongue, about life as it is, about things as they are!"

The field of fiction illimitable.

One may demand this from a novel-writer without implying for a moment that realistic fiction is any better or greater than romantic fiction, or

historical fiction, or Utopian fiction. The field of fiction is illimitable. It is a great pity that some American champions of realism saw fit to begin by sneering at their betters, or by running round and round Sir Walter Scott, barking at him. Hawthorne had as good a right to construct a romance, laying the scene in Rome, as had Mr. James to set a realistic novel — or at least a chapter of a realistic novel — in Albany, or to derive his heroine from Schenectady; and if Mr. James, who knows the theory of fiction so much better than Hawthorne, fails to make "The Portrait of a Lady" as great a book as "The Marble Faun," it simply proves, not that romance is superior to realism, or that life in Albany is any less suited to the novelist's art than life in Rome, but simply that Nathaniel Hawthorne is a better story-writer than Henry James.

English realism: Defoe.

In spite of the wide-spread interest in romantic fiction just at present, there is every reason for the champion of realism to keep his temper, and to read the books he likes best. No national fiction gives more triumphant evidence than the English of the success of the method that

does not shrink from the commonplace, the unpleasant, in its effort to render life as it is, things as they are. I turn at random the pages of the earliest master of English fiction, and come upon a passage like this: —

"When I came to open the chests, I found several things of great use to me; for example, I found in one a fine case of bottles, of an extraordinary kind, and filled with cordial waters, fine and very good; the bottles held about three pints each, and were tipped with silver. . . . I found some very good shirts, which were very welcome to me; and about a dozen and a half of white linen handkerchiefs and colored neckcloths; the former were also very welcome, being exceeding refreshing to wipe my face in a hot day. Besides this, when I came to the till in the chest, I found there three great bags of pieces-of-eight, which held about 1100 pieces in all; and in one of them, wrapped up in a paper, six doubloons of gold and some small bars or wedges of gold; I suppose they might all weigh near a pound."

The studied commonplaceness, the minute enumeration, the curious particularity, are of the very essence of realism; they make up what we call the verisimilitude of "Robinson Crusoe," its life-likeness. These qualities will, perhaps, be even more apparent on reading Defoe's less known books, such as "Roxana." Here the tone is grave, frank; the

details circumstantial; there is no fancy, no humor, no imagination, save the imagination that is directed upon things as they are, physically and morally; never was there a book with less of a romantic atmosphere; it is an absolutely realistic exposition of the sober, terribly earnest, Protestant theme that the wages of sin is death.

Richardson.

The attitude is the same, though the technique differs, in Richardson. At the age of fifty-one he wrote his first novel, "Pamela," whose heroine was a servant girl. He thought, he tells us, that if he wrote a story in an easy and natural manner — instead of a little book of familiar letters on the useful concerns of common life which his friends, the booksellers, had wished — he might possibly turn young people into a course of reading "different from the pomp and parade of romance writing, and dismissing the improbable and the marvelous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue."

Fielding.

"To promote the cause of religion and virtue" was somewhat ostentatiously announced by all the great eighteenth century novelists to be the object of

their labors. Their theory was that it could be accomplished by exhibiting men as they are, showing vice and virtue in their true light. "It is our business," says Fielding, "to discharge the part of a faithful historian, and to describe human nature as it is, not as we would wish it to be." "Alas," replies a critic like Sidney Lanier, "if you confront a man day by day with nothing but a picture of his own unworthiness, the final effect is not to stimulate, but to paralyze his moral energy. . . . If I had my way with those classic books, I would blot them from the face of the earth. . . . I can read none of them without feeling as if my soul had been in the rain, draggled, muddy, miserable." This is rather tropical language for a professed critic. Without claiming for a moment that eighteenth century fiction shows perfect art or a perfect morality, we may still assert that it is just as legitimate for a novelist to base his work upon human nature as it is, as upon human nature as he would wish it to be. If, following the first of these methods, his books paralyze our energy, then so much the worse for the novelist's conception of human nature. As for Fielding, who has to bear the brunt of the

attack, he is quite capable of fighting his own battles. His readers will gladly sacrifice "the sublimities" if they may be allowed to observe Partridge in the theatre, or "the postilion (a lad who hath been since transported for robbing a hen-roost)" playing the part of the Good Samaritan, or Sergeant Atkinson when he supposes himself to be dying and asks leave to kiss the hand of Mrs. Booth, or Amelia in that chapter "In which Amelia appears in a Light more Amiable than Gay."

The great succession of realists.

Such writing endures. It forms the public taste, it is sure to be imitated. Even when the influence of Rousseau and the French Revolution brought new types into English fiction, — embodying the social aspirations of the Revolution, the feeling for nature in her mildest and grandest forms, the gloomy, Byronic individual, the romance of the picturesque and terrible, to say nothing of the splendid series of historical novels in which the genius of Sir Walter Scott fascinated England and the continent, — England was rarely without some writer who did not shrink from the commonplace in the effort to represent life as it is. The great

Sir Walter, whose own Scotch novels exhibit such admirable realism, noted in his diary, March 14, 1826: —

"Read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

Jane Austen wrote while the English romantic movement was at its height; then in the succession of the great novelists came Thackeray, who burlesqued the romantic movement and satirized it; Dickens, with his vivid social sense, his glorification of lowly life; George Eliot, who completed her theory of fiction before she wrote a line, and who was realist to the core. Students of the realistic method as it existed in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century will never find more perfect harmony between critical theory and creative art than is found in "Adam Bede" and "The Mill on the Floss."

French realism: Madame Bovary.

The key word of George Eliot's art is sympathy; the key word of the French realists is detachment. What is called realism or "naturalism" in French fiction appeared shortly after 1850. Some look upon Balzac as its founder, and indeed as Balzac was by turns a little — nay, a great deal — of everything, he was now and again a capital realist. But French realism was beyond anything else a reaction against the French romanticism of the thirties, and the book that voiced this reaction, the book that has been called the "Don Quixote" of romanticism — doing for it what Cervantes did for chivalry — is Flaubert's "Madame Bovary." The theme of this novel which has exerted such a profound influence upon French fiction is told in six lines at the end of the fifth chapter:—

"Before her marriage, she believed herself in love, but as the happiness which should have resulted from that love did not come, she imagined that she must have been mistaken. And Emma endeavored to discover exactly what people understood in life by those words felicity, passion, intoxication, which had seemed to her so beautiful in books."

A romantic temperament put into real distasteful surroundings, the fine false senti-

ment of books tested by life as it is: it is no wonder that with such a theme "Madame Bovary" is a masterpiece. Victor Hugo, De Vigny, and the other romanticists had prided themselves on their "local color," but the localities were far away — in time or place: Flaubert took the Normandy of his own day, and studied its provincialism as Darwin studied a pigeon; he was a passionate worshiper of style; when he composed his book, he agonized over every sentence. "Madame Bovary" is incomparably written; it is absolutely realistic; its tone is cool, detached, brutal; like "The Scarlet Letter," it is a piece of work that some one ought to do, done once for all.

Followers of Flaubert.

Flaubert's method has been followed — of course with some modifications — by numberless pupils in the past thirty years: by Zola, a man of undoubted talent, of extraordinary imagination, who would have distinguished himself in any school of fiction, but who has offered himself as the champion of realism in his critical es says, and in his writings has done more than any dozen other men to bring realism into disrepute; by Daudet, who had that gift of

sympathy which has always marked English realism, and with it a delicacy of perception, a mastery of language, a knowledge of technique, which placed him at the head of his profession; by Maupassant, who might apparently have done anything — that is, anything a pessimist can do in fiction — had not his brain given way: and by a host of lesser men, who have now broken up into smaller groups or followed their individual caprice or conviction, for plain realism has long since gone out of fashion in Paris.

Realism in American fiction.

We must pass over the great names and great books that realism may claim for itself in Spain and Italy and Russia; and likewise the names and books of the American writers who have been in fullest sympathy with the realistic movement. Ours has been a day of international influences in literature. American authors have been quick to learn from foreign masters, and better still, have been fertile enough to write their own books in their own way. Realism has shown its fairer side in the American fiction of the last twenty-five years. It has betrayed its limitations, to be sure, and nowhere so markedly as in the

novels of the men who have stood before the public as the typical realists; but leaving that aside for the moment, how observant, honest, clever, sympathetic, delicate, in a word how artistic, has been and is to-day the realistic fiction of our own countrymen and countrywomen!

The remaining questions.

We have examined the theory of realism and have glanced, however briefly, at its historical development. It remains for us to inquire: What, after all, has realism accomplished? What are its limitations, its dangers? Finally, is the ultimate question in the art of fiction one of method?

Realism has opened new fields.

What, then, has realism accomplished? In the first place, it has opened new fields to the artist. Every great literary movement has indeed done that. Romanticism cried "Back to nature — to feeling," but what was meant by "nature" was romantic nature, by "feeling," romantic emotions. There is but one aspect of nature, one element of passion that is romantic, to twenty that are not; and realism has insisted that all of these are at

the disposal of the novelist. It has called nothing common, and, alas, very few things unclean. It has demolished the park wall that used to divide themes unforbidden from those forbidden to the artist; it has advised him to take his brush and palette and to stray through the inclosure at will. It has given him absolute liberty to portray things as he finds them, and the range and freshness and vividness of the artist's work have shown what an immense stimulus there is in freedom.

Created a new technique.

And realism has created a new technique. Tell a man he may paint anything, provided he gives you the sense of actuality, renders the subject as it is, and if he have the true artist's passion for technical perfection, he will learn to paint anything. In exact correspondence with that marvelous technical power exhibited in modern French pictures of the realistic school, there has been developed in realistic fiction a fidelity, a life-likeness, a vividness, a touch, which are extraordinary and new. Tolstoi describes a man standing upon the steps of his club, drawing on his gloves; it is nothing, and yet the picture is unforgettable. Hardy describes the gloves

of a working-woman gathering turnips on an English upland, and the image haunts you. Here are a few lines exemplifying this new method in English fiction. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, desolate and forsaken, is ringing the doorbell of the empty parsonage where the father and mother of her husband had lived.

"Nobody answered to her ringing. The effort had to be risen to, and made again. She rang a second time, and the agitation of the act, coupled with her weariness after the fourteen miles' walk, led her to support herself while she waited by resting her hand on her hip, and her elbow against the wall of the porch. The wind was so drying that the ivy-leaves had become wizened and gray, each tapping incessantly upon its neighbors with a disquieting stir of her nerves. A piece of blood-stained paper, caught up from some meat buyer's dust-heap, beat up and down the road without the gate; too flimsy to rest, too heavy to fly away; and a few straws kept it company."

We may look through the whole range of fiction, and we shall not find until our own day, and among the realists, a piece of blood-stained paper, beating impotently in the wind, used artistically, as a bit of the setting, to intensify the desolation, the horror, that are falling upon the spirit of the forsaken wife.

Realism and the scientific temper.

But realism has had relations to many other forces. It has been closely allied to that scientific temper which was discussed in the fourth chapter. Poetry and science, as we have seen, meet in the novel, and in many of the notable achievements of realism there is more science than poetry. The novels of so indubitable an artist as George Eliot would lose much of their quality if they lost the exact observation, the analytic power, the faculty for generalization, which she possessed in common with Pasteur. No one can doubt that certain positive benefits have accrued to realistic fiction in thus linking itself with the far-reaching scientific spirit of our time. It has gained in precision, solidity, breadth. But we must in a moment inquire whether it has gained, in relation to qualities even higher than these, through its association with science.

Relations to democracy and Christianity.

Realism, too, has had clearly marked lines of relationship with the democratic spirit. We must touch upon these in the chapter devoted to the tendencies of American fiction. Furthermore, I think it may fairly be claimed that the theory on which realism is based is in

close accord with the spirit of Christianity. For the theory of realism teaches that the "every-day life of all" is worth something — if only worth describing; it teaches the reality of our present experiences, the significance of common things. In childhood, perhaps, the real is too near, too obvious, to be attractive. We have seen big boys; tell us the story of the Giants! We have played with the rocking-horse; please read to us about Bucephalus and the Centaurs! The far-away attracts us with a romantic charm; anywhere rather than here is where we childishly long to be. These illusions fade as we grow older; it is perhaps after a long period of disillusion that we turn suddenly to the real. Here is our world,

> . . . "Here we find
> Our destined happiness, or not at all."

The actual grows spiritually significant. The world becomes intelligible, interesting. It is a live world — God's world. The forces about us are real forces; the men and women we know are real personalities. Therefore we say to the novelist: "Show us as much of this most real of all worlds as you can. Let us see how deep is your vision; does it

penetrate as the Eternal Vision penetrates, is it as comprehensive as that, as loving as that?"

Said the Russian novelist Gogol: "I have studied life as it really is, not in dreams of the imagination; and thus I have come to a conception of Him who is the source of all life."

Realism and "the every-day life."

It is the sentimentalist, the romanticist, who exclaims: "I have enough of ordinary life; I experience it *ad nauseam;* give me the diamond, the unusual, the far-away, the exceptional." That was exactly the cry of Emma Bovary, poor Emma Bovary who, in Brunetière's words, is just like all of us, only a trifle too sensual and endowed with too little intelligence to accept the daily duty, to learn its charm and its latent poetry. The value of "the every-day life" to the more thoughtful type of mind has been well expressed by Richard Holt Hutton in his essay on Shelley: —

"Poets, and artists, and thinkers, and theologians, who hunger after reality, hold, we suppose, that the actual combination of qualities and substances and personal influences as God has made them, contains something much better worth knowing and imagining accurately, than any recast they could effect of their

own. They believe in the infinite significance of actual ties. And those who feel this, as all realists do usually feel it, must cherish a certain spirit of faithful tenacity at the bottom of their minds, a respect for the mere fact of existence, a wish to see good reason before they separate things joined together by nature, and perhaps, they will think, by divine law; a disposition to cling to the details of experience, as having at least a presumptive sacredness; nay, they feel even a higher love for such beauty as is presented to them in the real universe, than for any which is got by the dissolving and recomposing power of their own eclectic idealism." *Literary Essays*, p. 174.

The significance of the present.

Now the great realists in fiction take the every-day life of all; from the material furnished by the average man in the ordinary situation they form their work of art. They reveal — at their best moments — the reality of things; that is, the spiritual and enduring side of things, the divine in the human, God's world existing in and through our world. It is in this sense that Christianity is on the side of realism, because Christianity deepens our sense of the actual, and of the eternal significance of the Here and Now, of the infinite potentialities of character. When we have learned to look at men and women as they are, the world as it is, to see in it some-

thing of perennial freshness and suggestiveness, to feel it beating with the Infinite Heart, then the writer of fiction who can interpret human life to us most closely, most sympathetically, bring it to us most intimately, is the realist. But if the actual world is *ennuyeux* to us, then we should logically take refuge in another sort of fiction, — in the stories of other times and other places, of other orders of beings, acting under conditions different from our own. If the sunlight, the clear, frank sunlight, is too strong for us, or too colorless, let us by all means spread a purple awning, and diffuse a romantic atmosphere of our own.

Limitations of realism.

In what has just been written, I have made the very highest claim for the possibilities of realistic art. Yet it is easy to see the limitations of realism. The realist says: "I paint things as they are, the world as it is;" but by this he means necessarily things as they are to him, the world as it is to him. However objective he strives to be, he looks out upon the world through the lens of his own personality. His art is conditioned upon his vision, his physical

vision, his psychical vision. In the very nature of the case, that vision is more or less contracted, blurred. What he takes for reality may not be reality. There is but one real world, and that is God's world. The novelist's world, depend upon it, will be but an imperfect copy; what he calls the real world will be his own world, not God's world, but a Turgenieff world, a Thomas Hardy world, a Miss Wilkins world. Alas! what distortion! what pitiful limitation! A realist with well-nigh perfect physical vision may have what the brain specialists call psychic blindness, — inability to perceive the meaning of the visual impression. He may be a pure materialist, seeing only the animal side of life, devoting great talents to the analysis of wrath and love as functions of the bodily organism. He may steadfastly ignore those hopes and aspirations that reach out beyond the confines of mortality, that lay hold upon the world to come.

Its dangers: lack of sympathy.

And realism has its dangers as well as its limitations. The realist must represent actualities; he must study them objectively; he must be an observer; and nothing is easier than for him

to learn to observe without sympathy. This is, as the reader may remember, what Hawthorne dreaded; it is the theme of his "Ethan Brand." It is the "detachment" which has been one of the catchwords of French realism, and which explains why so much of the fiction of the last generation in France, with all its wonderful qualities, has nevertheless been so pitiless.

Technique and nothing more.

Another danger for realism lies in that very technical excellence which the French writers have brought to such perfection. To the vivid rendering of the appearances of things, other qualities equally important to artistic work of a high rank have been sacrificed. Technique and nothing back of it is a besetting foe to the realist. It is so much easier to start with painting the surface, to be content with outdoing one's rivals in cleverness, in tricks of the brush, in "impressionism." But the cleverest record of fact, the most sensitive rendering of atmosphere, fails, by itself, to make fiction vital. The lack of imagination in some of those books whose technical workmanship seems beyond praise is startling. By imagination I do not mean a journey into

cloudland, but the power of seeing real things imaginatively. One of the Goncourt brothers puts forth this request in a preface to a novel: —

"I want to write a novel which shall be the study of a young girl, — a novel founded on human documents. I find that books about women, written by men, lack feminine collaboration. The impressions of a little girl, confidences as to her feelings at the time of confirmation, her sensations when she first goes into society, the unveiling of the most delicate emotions, — in a word, all the unknown femininity at the depths of a woman, these are what I need. And I ask my feminine readers, in those unoccupied hours, when the past, in its gloom or happiness, rises before them, to write these thoughts or memories down for me, to send them to me anonymously at the address of my publisher."

Comment upon the delicacy of this proposition is quite needless, but did ever a professed artist make a more pitiful confession of his own imaginative sterility? To put yourself in another person's place is the first law of the novelist's creative imagination; this disciple of Flaubert stretches forth his hands impotently for the other person's documents.

Facts not enough.

It is just here that the alliance of realism with the scientific spirit,

which, as we have seen, has given fiction precision, solidity, breadth, has nevertheless with some schools of fiction wrought irreparable mischief. The scientific temper, untransmuted by artistic feeling, has never been of value in any of the fine arts; the application of scientific methods to fiction has time and again crowded the creative imagination off the field to make room for the documents. There is of course an endless variety in nature and in human nature, but an endless succession of realists, working merely by scientifically accurate observation and record, can never produce a great novel any more than an endless succession of photographers can produce a great picture. They can give us a marvelous array of facts, but fact is not fiction. Science cares for facts, art, in the high sense, for facts only as they reveal truths; and unless the writer of fiction uses facts to explain truths, his work is like the dead iron before it is carbonized into steel, like prose uncrystallized into poetry.

Animalism.

The last danger that the realist runs is perhaps the most obvious, if it be not the worst. It is the danger, already elluded to in a previous chapter, of represent-

ing the body rather than the mind, the physiological to the exclusion of the psychological. A reviewer in the "New York Evening Post" has put this sharply, but not unjustly.

"It is only fair to say that what we have called animalism others pronounce wonderful realism. We use the word animalism for the sake of clearness, to denote a species of realism which deals with man considered as an animal, capable of hunger, thirst, lust, cruelty, vanity, fear, sloth, predacity, greed, and other passions and appetites that make him kin to the brutes, but which neglects, so far as possible, any higher qualities which distinguish him from his four-footed relatives, such as humor, thought, reason, aspiration, affection, morality, and religion. Real life is full of the contrasts between these conflicting tendencies, but the object of the animalistic school seems always to make a study of the *genus homo* which shall recall the menagerie at feeding-time rather than human society."

There is plenty of animalism in human society, as everybody knows; but this does not justify a man of talent in writing as if there were nothing but animalism. The novelists who have followed their morbid-minded leaders over the park wall, in search of material which has hitherto been considered too sacred or too horrible to be used by fiction, have been so severely taken to task for it by the best critics, that we may content ourselves

with a single remark. Crossing the park wall leaves a man no better painter than he was before. He may sit outside, with brushes and colors and palette, and sigh for the forbidden subjects. He may then cry,

"Down with Reticence, down with Reverence — forward" —

and follow his indefatigable leader across the broken wall; he may select his forbidden fruit and begin to paint it. Very well; he is just the same painter as ever: no more true of eye, no more skillful of hand; indeed, since the man must often cross the barrier between decency and indecency with the artist, the hand may not be so steady, nor the eye so clear. What then is gained? The picture, the book, sells to a debased public, which it helps still further to debase; but to a sensitive writer of fiction there can scarcely be a worse Inferno than the thought that a book has sold at the expense of the artistic capacity of the writer himself.

The testimony of Valdés.

No more powerful protest against this naturalism has yet appeared than the one uttered by the Spanish novelist Valdés in the preface to his "Sister St. Sulpice:" —

"I believe firmly with the naturalist writers that man represents on this planet the ultimate phase of animal evolution, and that on this supposition the study of his animal instincts and passions is interesting, and explains a great number of his actions. But this study has for me only a historic value, because if man proceeds directly from animality, every day he goes farther and farther away from it, and this and nothing else is the basis of our own progress. We come surely from the instinctive, the unconscious, the necessary, but we are going forward toward the rational, the conscious, and the free. Therefore the study of all that refers to the rational, free, and conscious mind as the explanation of a great proportion of human acts, the only noble and worthy ones, is far superior to the first. It is more interesting to study man as man than as an animal, although the naturalist school thinks otherwise. . . . In order that there should be beauty in man, it is necessary that he show himself as man, and not as brute."

The bankruptcy of realism in France.

It is to such causes that we must assign the bankruptcy of realism in France. It has ventured as far into forbidden territory as any fiction is ever likely to go, and it has brought back pictures that defile the imagination and sicken the heart. It has made disreputable an artistic method which in other countries, and in the hands of many a French writer, has served great ends. The limits have long since been reached, and before the close of the nine-

teenth century the Paris critics began coolly to balance the assets and liabilities of realism, as with the ledgers of a wrecked concern.

The future of realism.

Yet in England and America, and indeed everywhere outside this eddy in a single European city, the currents of realism have by no means spent their force. Realism has wrought itself too thoroughly into the picture of the modern world, it is too significant a movement, to allow any doubt as to the permanence of its influence. It is true that in the opening years of the twentieth century we Americans are witnessing a sort of "Romantic Revival," whose devotees are complaisant toward any books that excite and entertain them. In the face of this unappeasable and perfectly legitimate thirst for romance, has the realistic method vitality enough to hold its own?

A question of men, not of method.

In art, no method, of itself, has vitality; it is men that have vitality. The only promise of permanent life for a novel is in the creative imagination of the writer. Everything else has been proved transient. No "ism" can save a book beyond an hour. The ultimate question in the art of fiction, therefore, is not

what is the method of to-day, of the future; it is, what are the men who are to be back of the method? In place, therefore, of speculating as to the future of realism, let us turn to the future realist, and assert what manner of man he must be if realism is to be credited with any coming triumphs. The assertion may be made very positively, it seems to me, and in very simple terms.

Seeing, feeling, and thinking.

"Guy de Maupassant sees," said a recent magazine writer, "Pierre Loti feels, Paul Bourget thinks." Each of these admirable but highly specialized artists represents a quality that is essential to the greatest writers of fiction. How clearly Maupassant sees, how sensitively Pierre Loti feels, how delicate and grave is the thinking of Bourget! The organization, let us say, is perfect. But what does this one see, and that one feel, and the other one think? Does Maupassant bring to us nothing more than the pitilessness of life, Loti the pathos of life, Bourget a sense of the confusion of life? We have a right to demand of the future novelist that he shall see *and* feel *and* think. But he shall see things as they are, the world as it is; God's world. He shall feel in the men

and women around him the pulsation of the Infinite Heart. He shall think nobly, because truly. And his shall be such mastery of his material that no technical resource shall be unknown to him, no feat of creative imagination too hard for him; and by virtue of that mastery he shall make us see and feel and think, so that when we read his book it may be with the joy of deeper insight and quicker sympathy and a new hold on truth. Truth shall be the key word of his art, and the truth that he reveals shall be seen of us as beauty.

When that man comes, I should call him a realist: but he is welcome to call himself an idealist, a romanticist, or any other name he likes. And while we are waiting, we can turn once more the pages of "Amelia" and "Henry Esmond" and "Adam Bede."

CHAPTER X

ROMANTICISM

"I cannot get on with Books about the Daily Life which I find rather insufferable in practice about me. I never could read Miss Austen, nor (later) the famous George Eliot. Give me People, Places, and Things which I don't and can't see; Antiquaries, Jeanie Deans, Dalgettys, etc. . . . As to Thackeray's, they are terrible; I really look at them on the shelf and am half afraid to touch them. He, you know, could go deeper into the Springs of Common Action than these Ladies; wonderful he is, but not Delightful, which one thirsts for as one gets old and dry."

Edward FitzGerald to S. Laurence, December 30, 1875.

"The discussion is quite vain, into which so many fishermen have gone, on the question whether the artificial fly is to be used on the imitation theory. Trout take some flies because they resemble the real fly on which they feed. They take other flies for no such reason. And in this they are like men."

W. C. Prime, *I Go A-Fishing.*

Its various meanings.

In the discussion of romanticism, as of realism, one is first of all confronted by the fact that the word is capable of many varieties of meaning. Its significance shifts as the critic passes from one country, one generation, one group of men, to another. Fortunately for the student of

literature, however, there have been many brilliant and scholarly treatises upon the character and history of romanticism. Some of the most important books and articles upon the subject are mentioned in the bibliography for the present chapter in the Appendix. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to explain the more general meanings which have been attached to the word, and to indicate briefly the rôle which romanticism has played in various national literatures. We can then pass to the discussion of romanticism in fiction, and endeavor to see what qualities it implies in the writer, the book, and the public.

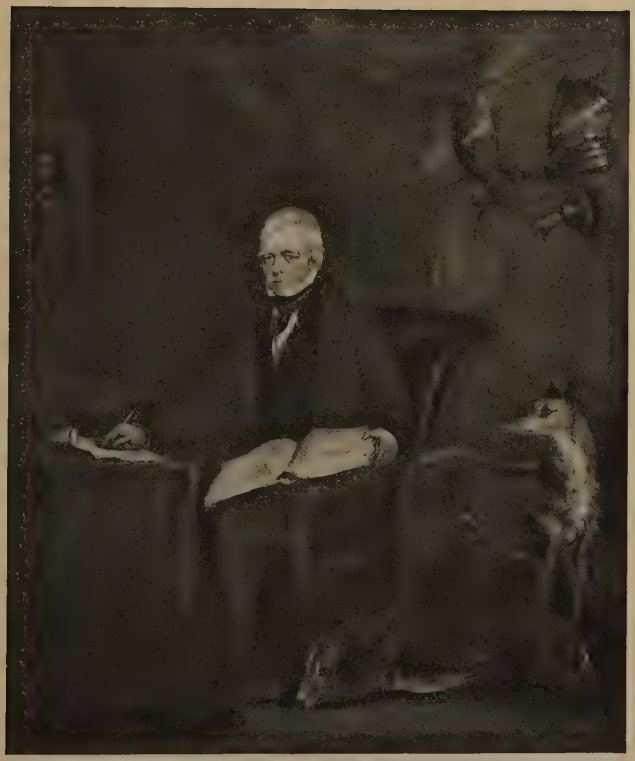
Hegel.

One of the most famous discussions of romanticism is to be found in Hegel's "Æsthetics." He points out that in the evolution of art there are three phases which characterize different stages of its development. The first of these phases is the symbolic, in which, according to Hegel, the material element overmasters the spiritual element. Most architecture may be said to remain permanently in this symbolic stage. Next comes the classic phase, where the material and spiritual elements are in equilibrium. This phase is best represented by

sculpture. Finally comes the romantic phase, where the spiritual element predominates over the material, and which is best exemplified by the arts of music, painting, and poetry. Hegel points out, furthermore, that these three phases may be illustrated in the history of any one art. In sculpture, for instance, although as a whole it is predominantly classic, there may be traced distinctively symbolic, classic, and romantic periods. While later critics have shown that this analysis of Hegel's must be subjected to many modifications, it remains an extremely suggestive one, and affords a convenient starting point for our own discussion.

"Classic" and "romantic" qualities.

Every educated person is more or less distinctly aware of certain qualities which, when evidenced in a work of art, are by common consent called "classic." These classic qualities may be indicated by terms like "purity of feeling," "reserve," "perfection of form." It is true that these qualities are often accompanied by such defects as coldness and formalism. There are likewise certain "romantic" qualities suggested by the very word itself; for instance, freedom, warmth, expressiveness. In



Walter Scott

attaining these qualities the artist frequently runs the risk of falling into lawlessness, into the caprices of a disordered imagination. What seems significant to him may be vague or even meaningless to us; for the romantic artist, generally speaking, deals more with the emotional element than with the purely intellectual factors that enter into the work of art.

Illustrations.

But, however one may choose to define classic and romantic characteristics, it is apparent that in all the arts it is possible to point out specific objects which are characterized by one or the other group of qualities already mentioned. Thus the Parthenon is classic; Cologne Cathedral romantic; the Apollo Belvedere classic; Rodin's "Apollo" romantic; the "Antigone" of Sophocles classic; "A Midsummer Night's Dream" of Shakespeare romantic; Beethoven's music — in its general features at least — classic; Chopin's romantic. However widely critics may be inclined to differ in their assessment of the value of such representative works of art as those just named, they would agree in the general classification here given. We find, then, that it is possi-

ble to apply to literature, as well as to the other arts of expression, the term romantic. Let us try to see still more precisely what the word connotes.

Romantic movements in literature: England.

The last century is rich in examples of romantic movements in literature. In England, Germany, and France there have been sharply defined romantic periods, illuminated by great names and producing memorable works. These periods have had their special characteristics, their peculiar modes of development and channels of expression. Yet underneath all these differences it is easy to see that common factors have been at work. In England, for instance, we can trace far back in the eighteenth century the beginnings of the romantic temper. Professor Beers [1] and Professor Phelps [2] have devoted interesting chapters to the first impulses, feeble and imitative as these were, to break away from the frigid conventions into which the great Augustan tradi-

[1] *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century.* By H. A. Beers. New York: Henry Holt, 1899. See also *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century.* By the same author. New York: Holt, 1901.

[2] *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement.* By W. L. Phelps. Boston: Ginn, 1893.

tions had degenerated. The English romantic movement came to its perfect flowering in such men as Coleridge and Keats, Scott, Byron, and Shelley. Curious as were the differences that divided the leading English romanticists, making many of them bitter personal enemies, these men all held to certain tenets of a common creed. Like true children of Rousseau, they cried, "Back to nature," emphasizing particularly the picturesque and terrible aspects of natural scenery. But they cried also, "Back to simple, elemental feeling." From this point of view, two such apparently diverse poems as Wordsworth's "We are Seven" and Byron's "The Corsair" are in fundamental accord. And the English romanticists insisted, and with increasing fervor as the romantic movement drew toward its close, "Let us go back to history, to the manners and institutions of our forefathers." Yet curiously enough, though all the English romanticists were strongly interested in politics, the romantic movement in Great Britain left politics and religion practically untouched.

In Germany.

The German romantic movement, however, was, as many critics have

pointed out, a Catholic renaissance. It was a revolt against the classic paganism of Goethe, Lessing, Winckelmann, and Schiller. It idolized Roman countries, such as Italy; the authors of southern Europe, such as Calderon. In such representative German romanticists as Tieck, the Schlegel brothers, and Novalis, there is everywhere to be found a love of warmth and color, the worship of enthusiasm, the desire to become like little children in sensitiveness to impressions, in naïveté of emotion. Professor Francke[1] has pointed out the three phases through which the German romantic movement swiftly ran its course: first, that of individual caprice; second, fantastic sensualism; and third, a flight into the land of the supernatural and miraculous. In politics, as it is scarcely necessary to say, the German romantic movement was reactionary. It strengthened the hands of absolutism in government as in religion.

In France.

In France, on the other hand, the romantic movement was pagan and republican. Instead of worshiping the

[1] *Publications of the Modern Language Association.* New series, Vol. III, No. 1.

authors of southern Europe, it was most strongly influenced by such men as Scott, Byron, and Shakespeare. That is to say, it was a German, a gothic romanticism, grafted upon the French stock. The French writers who came in the generation of the thirties, such as Victor Hugo, DeVigny, Musset, George Sand, and Balzac, rescued the French language from the classic formalism into which it was in danger of declining. They produced a wonderful literature, glowing with colors like those of the great romantic painters Delacroix and Delaroche, and echoing with fantastic music like that of Berlioz and Chopin. They performed a great patriotic service likewise, and in their common worship of art they sustained the French tradition of intelligent, capable workmanship. Such romantic literature as this is sure to have in its own day and generation an immense vogue. Whether it meets the literary canons of succeeding generations, whether it contains in itself those elements which may one day be recognized as classic, is quite another matter. How slender, how colorless a literary product seems Goldsmith's "The Vicar of Wakefield" when compared with Victor Hugo's "Les

Misérables" ! And yet, as the years go by, it does not seem hazardous to assert that "The Vicar of Wakefield" possesses certain qualities which are likely to insure for it a more enduring life than was imparted to "Les Misérables" by the splendid exuberance, the affluent fancy, the poignant tragic power of the great Frenchman.

Critical terms are relative.

It is only through wide acquaintance with the books written during one or all of these representatively romantic periods that one becomes gradually aware of the elasticity of meaning, as well as the persistent drift of meaning, that abides in the term "romanticism." One perceives the justice of some of the famous definitions which make it synonymous with "aspiration," "mystery," "the spirit of Christianity," "the emancipation of the ego," "liberalism in literature," "the renaissance of wonder," and "strangeness in beauty, rather than order in beauty." Yet many of these definitions reveal their inadequacy the moment they are applied to other phases of romanticism than the particular one which has evoked the definition. Romantic material may be treated with the spirit of classicism;

and conversely the romantic method may be applied to subjects that are severely classical. And there is a true and a false romanticism, just as there is a true and a false classicism. Professor Beers, in the preface to his "English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century," reaffirms his right to use romanticism as synonymous with "mediævalism," making it, in other words, the reproduction in modern art or literature of the life or thought of the middle ages. The working value of this definition is indisputable, although it needs, perhaps, the further explanation of mediævalism which is given in these words of Walter Pater: —

"The essential elements, then, of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty; and it is only as an illustration of these qualities that it seeks the Middle Age, because, in the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Age, there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty, to be won, by strong imagination, out of things unlikely or remote." [1]

There is another passage in this essay of Pater's which becomes particularly suggestive as one approaches the study of romanticism in fiction: —

"There are the born classicists who start with *form*, to whose minds the comeliness of the old, immemorial,

[1] *Appreciations*, p. 261.

well-recognized types in art and literature have revealed themselves impressively; who will entertain no matter which will not go easily and flexibly into them; whose work aspires only to be a variation upon, or study from the older masters. 'T is art's decline, my son!' they are always saying to the progressive element in their own generation; to those who care for that which in fifty years' time every one will be caring for. On the other hand there are the born romanticists, who start with an original, untried *matter*, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work; who, by the very vividness and heat of their conception, purge away, sooner or later, all that is not organically appropriate to it, till the whole effect adjusts itself in clear, orderly, proportionate form; which form, after a very little time, becomes classical in its turn. The romantic or classical character of a picture, a poem, a literary work, depends then on the balance of certain qualities in it; and in this sense, a very real distinction may be drawn between good classical and good romantic work. But all critical terms are relative; and there is at least a valuable suggestion in that theory of Stendhal's, that all good art was romantic in its day." [1]

Romanticism in fiction.

Bearing in mind, therefore, that "all critical terms are relative," let us turn more definitely to the field of fiction. What is meant by romantic fiction, as compared with realistic and other types? The definition of "romance" given in the Century Dictionary will be helpful: —

[1] *Appreciations*, p. 271.

"A tale in verse in one of the Romance dialects, as early French or Provençal. A popular epic. A fictitious story of heroic, marvelous, or supernatural incidents derived from history or legend. A tale or novel dealing *not so much* [*sic*] with real and familiar life as with extraordinary and often extravagant adventures ('Don Quixote'); with rapid and violent changes in scene and fortunes ('Count of Monte Cristo'); with mysterious and supernatural events ('Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'); or with morbid idiosyncrasies of temperament ('Caleb Williams'); or picturing imaginary conditions of society influenced by imaginary characters (Fouqué's 'Undine')."

The reader will note that I have taken the liberty of italicising the words "not so much." We are concerned with a question of relative emphasis. According to the relative amount of stress which it lays upon the extraordinary, the mysterious, the imaginary, does the romance differ from the novel. What is the reason for this difference in emphasis?

The mood of the romantic writer.

For answer we must look to the writer of romance, and endeavor to see why he turns away from the common facts of experience. It is a question of mood. The romantic writer, as such, is dissatisfied with the artistic material furnished by every-day life. This is not saying that, as a man, he is dissatisfied with life; that he

is a pessimist or a cynic. Poe was this, and Hawthorne was not, although both were romanticists. It is simply saying that when he wishes to construct a story, the romanticist desires to weave it out of different material from that which his every-day experience offers. In the words of Don Quixote's niece, he wants "better bread than wheaten." He seeks not the violet that grows in common fields, but some mysterious "blue flower," which forever eludes him. He portrays, not some woman whom he has met that morning on the street, but a woman of his dreams. The images, the sounds that haunt his imagination, are not those of wearisome, reiterated reality. And it should be needless to say that all this is perfectly legitimate, that it is wholly in keeping with one mode of the artistic temperament.

The romantic atmosphere.

It is to this characteristic of the romantic writer that is due what we call the "atmosphere" of romantic works of fiction. No better description of it can be given than that which was penned by one of the most perfect masters of it — Nathaniel Hawthorne — in the well known preface to "The House of the Seven Gables."

"When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former — while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart — has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime even if he disregard this caution.

"In the present work, the author has proposed to himself — but with what success, fortunately, it is not for him to judge — to keep undeviatingly within his immunities. The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the reader, accord-

ing to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events for the sake of a picturesque effect."

It is needless to say that, in books like "The House of the Seven Gables," "The Scarlet Letter," or "The Marble Faun," the reader sees the personages and events of the story through the warm or sombre romantic medium, — the special atmosphere which the author has created for him. In the most successful stories of Mr. Howells, on the other hand, the atmosphere is precisely that of Boston or New York during the year or decade described in the story. The realist has succeeded with singular skill in making a vertical sunlight strike upon his pages. To turn from such novels as these to the romances of Hawthorne is to pass from the clear, frank sunlight of high noon into the mist of dawn, the glow of the sunset, the wavering outlines of moonlight. Which atmosphere is more attractive depends upon the temperament, the momentary mood, the literary training of the individual reader. It is foolish to endeavor to prove that one type of book — as a type — is better than the other. All that we are now concerned to see is that there is a

difference; that the presence or absence of the romantic atmosphere largely determines the nature of a work of fiction.

Remoteness of time.

How is this atmosphere to be secured? The writer frequently compasses it by the simple expedient of placing his story in a remote period, where the very distance enhances the atmospheric effect. Mr. Crawford's "Zoroaster" will serve to illustrate this type of romantic novel. The mere remoteness in time from our own day and generation is sufficient to give such a romance an appeal to the historic imagination. Indeed, almost all historical fiction is in this sense of the word romantic fiction. Now and again surprising efforts have been made, as in the Egyptian novels of George Ebers, to paint the personages and the scenes of remote antiquity with all the detailed accuracy of a chronicle of the present day. Such experiments in applying the realistic method to the depiction of historical personages and events have commonly failed, however, to impart either any sense of reality or any romantic charm. It is surely wiser to follow the course of the great writers of historical romance in avoiding a too curious consideration

of exact details. "Quentin Durward" and "The Talisman" are all wrong archæologically, yet they are triumphs of fiction-writing none the less.

Strangeness of scene.

There is, too, a romanticism which owes its atmosphere to strangeness of place rather than remoteness of time. We know how the imaginations of Southey and Coleridge were affected by the sound of the syllables in the word Susquehanna, upon the banks of which unvisited, romantic stream they were desirous of founding a Utopian colony. That element of our human nature which constantly tempts us to belittle what is actually present, and to idealize and glorify what is beyond the field of our own vision, is constantly playing into the hands of the romance-writer. Mr. Crawford's "Mr. Isaacs," for instance, seems, to one reading the story in England or America, to move in a sort of fairyland. But the traveler familiar with the East is likely to have met the actual Mr. Isaacs in his jewelry shop in Delhi, and to smile at the mere romance of place which has so moved the imagination of the untraveled reader.

The atmosphere of passion.

But remoteness of time and place do not contribute more perfectly to the creation of romantic atmosphere than do quite modern and present circumstances, provided these are viewed through an atmosphere of intense emotion. Let passion enter, let fury or pathos or tragedy brood over the personages of a story, and it matters little how sordid and prosaic the world in which the characters move. We have used Mr. Crawford's "Zoroaster" and "Mr. Isaacs" to exemplify certain types of romantic atmosphere. There is a chapter of his "Casa Braccio" where he describes the interior of an Italian restaurant in a fashion that would do credit to any realistic writer, but the vulgar interior is flooded with the intense light of passion and crime. The familiar outlines, the scents and odors and sights of the place are filled, as it were, by the mist of anguish and terror. To be able to accomplish such a feat as this is to prove one's self a master of the methods of romance.

Romantic sentiment in the public.

We have been looking at the writer of romances and at those qualities in his books which make

it possible for them to convey an atmosphere of romantic sentiment. This sentiment would be ineffectual, however, if it were not for the corresponding, the reciprocal, sentiment on the part of the public itself. The public is never more like a healthy child than in its thirst for the exceptional and the exotic. I have chosen as one of the mottoes for this chapter the verdict of a veteran fisherman, who declares that "trout take some flies because they resemble the real fly on which they feed. They take other flies for no such reason. And in this they are like men." In truth, we all like, at certain seasons, the strange, bright-colored creations of a novelist's fancy, and the more vividly they differ from the sober colors of reality the greater the pleasure they afford.

In youth and age.

To youth, colored as it is with romantic hues of its own devising, no fiction seems so improbable as to forbid acceptance. Old age, disillusionized by many adventures, by many voyages into far-off seas, loves to cheat itself once more with the swiftly spun web of romantic delusion. The first motto for the present chapter is a passage from one of the letters of Edward Fitz-

Gerald regarding the novels of Thackeray. It was written in December, 1875, when FitzGerald felt himself "old and dry," and in no mood for the fiction that deals with human life in its profounder aspects. Yet only three years before he was writing about Disraeli's romantic novel "Lothair:" —

"Altogether the Book is like a pleasant Magic Lantern: when it is over I shall forget it: and shall want to return to what I do not forget; some of Thackeray's monumental Figures of 'pauvre et triste Humanité,' as Old Napoleon called it: Humanity in its depths, not in its superficial Appearances."

There could scarcely be a better illustration of the shifting moods of a sympathetic, sensitive reader than that given by these two passages from FitzGerald's letters.

A literature of evasion.

All of us, in certain hours of weariness, of relaxation from the daily toil, of twilight dreaming, desire to forget the disappointments of actual experience. Romantic fiction furnishes a literature of evasion. It allows us to escape from the complications, the fret, the strain of living. In such hours one is willing to leave the reading of realistic fiction to the strong, the courageous persons who have no fear of

the facts of life; who prefer to face them, with all their terrible implications. It is enough for the rest of us, for the time being, at least, to wander away into some enchanted land "far from this our war."

The "neo-romantic movement."

It is easy to understand, therefore, how the modern "neo-romantic" movement has arisen as a reaction against realism. It is impossible to analyze exactly these changes in the reading public's temper. They are as unaccountable, apparently as whimsical, as the variations in any other human appetite. But there are few sympathetic readers of modern English fiction who do not feel grateful for the books written by the younger men who, with Stevenson as their gallant leader, came into prominence during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. Few or none of these men have revealed themselves as great personalities seriously engaged in interpreting the more vital aspects of human experience. Sometimes one is even inclined to doubt whether most of them have very much to say. But they have at least performed the useful service of giving delight to their contemporaries. Many of them have been mas-

ters of the story-telling art; they have learned brevity of description, brilliancy of narrative, ready invention of situations and events. Their task, after all, is far less difficult than that of the author of great realistic fiction. The Spanish novelist Valdés has remarked, in the previously quoted preface to his novel "Sister St. Sulpice," —

> "The talent of dazzling with strange events, of interesting by means of complicated intrigues and impossible characters, is possessed to-day in Europe by several hundreds of writers, while there are not much more than a dozen of those who can awaken interest with the common acts of existence, and with the painting of characters genuinely human."

But these "hundreds of writers" have learned at least to avoid certain pitfalls into which the authors of realistic fiction have been apt to stumble. They have learned not to preach, not to go too far in depicting unpleasant phases of life, and not to let a love of accuracy of detail persuade them into the composition of pages that are only weariness to the reader. In the long history of the English novel there has been no period when so many readable books have been written as in the last twenty-five years. Whether many

of these books are destined to last beyond the moment may naturally be doubted. The very variety and originality which captures the public attention for the season are often an obstacle to permanent literary fame. To quote once more from the preface to "Sister St. Sulpice:" —

> "Extremely original works produce a lively impression upon the public for the moment, but are speedily forgotten. And this is because their originality frequently lies in a deviation from the truth, and truth is not slow in reasserting its sway, because it alone is eternal and beautiful. The public does not admire the poet or novelist who holds the reins of his imagination and makes it serve his purpose, who understands how to give fit preparation to his work and writes with naturalness and good sense. And yet as a general rule these are the ones that become immortal."

Romanticism and idealism.

No discussion of romantic fiction is adequate which leaves out of view the relation of romanticism to idealism. Idealism is necessary, is inevitable, in every true work of art. It means building up a whole in accordance with the artist's idea; it means freeing his material from accidental elements so that he may express its real significance. There is as profound and far-reaching idealism in a realistic novel like

"Middlemarch" as there is in a romance like Sienkiewicz's "Fire and Sword." But many discussions of realism have devoted themselves to pointing out a supposed antagonism between realism and idealism, as if no realistic novel could possibly express an ideal. By far the more vital contrast is, as we have seen, between realism and romanticism. That is to say, along what lines is the artist to work out his ideal? Is he to stand solidly upon the earth, to base his work upon the actualities of mortal experience, or is he to leave the earth behind him and go voyaging off into the blue? Tolstoi's "Resurrection," with its frank inclusion of many repellent and painful aspects of human experience, is a thoroughly realistic piece of fiction. Yet its main theme is to show what sort of reconstruction of human society would be necessary if the teachings of the New Testament were really to be accepted as an actual rule of life. There could be no theme more idealistic than this. On the other hand, Miss Johnston's "To Have and to Hold" is a frankly romantic story, one in which the men are brave and the women beautiful; where there are pirates and shipwrecks, sword and

saddle, battle, murder, and sudden death. It portrays such a state of society as never existed in Colonial Virginia or anywhere else upon the face of the earth. It likewise is a piece of pure idealism ; it "leaves the ground to lose itself in the sky." But it is as truly romantic in its entire texture as Tolstoi's study of contemporary Russia is realistic.

What does the novelist think of life ?

In the last analysis, therefore, the question becomes simply this : What does the artist in fiction think of life ? If he believes it to be a good thing, the best thing God has given us, he may wish, and probably will wish, to keep his art close to it. Provided he have ideas, there is no danger that his work will lack idealism. But if, on the other hand, he desires "better bread than wheaten," if life does not seem to him very good, then he must surely dream out something different. He must create an imaginary world, whether in Colonial Virginia or elsewhere, and keep his art close to that. He too, provided he have ideas, will not lack idealism. But whatever he thinks about life itself, about the conditions in which plain men and women move and form the shifting figures in the pattern of the eternal

human comedy, it is his task to make something beautiful. He must give pleasure, no matter from what materials the texture of his craft is woven, no matter what method he chooses to adopt. Which material or which method gives the higher pleasure, the more permanent delight, to generations of readers, will depend entirely upon the readers themselves. It can never be settled by any theoretical discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of realistic or romantic art.

CHAPTER XI

THE QUESTION OF FORM

"The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact: then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated; then we can follow lines and directions, and compare tones and resemblances. Then, in a word, we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution."

HENRY JAMES, *Partial Portraits.*

To be well written.

IN one of the most genial passages of his "Partial Portraits," Mr. Henry James has described those Sunday afternoon gatherings of a famous group of novelists in Flaubert's little salon, where the talk concerned itself mainly with the methods of the art of fiction. These men had long since passed beyond the point where they interested themselves with questions of morals or conscious purpose; to them "the only duty of a novel was to be well written; that merit included every other of which it was capable."

Matter, man, and manner.

What does "well written" mean? It is a question of form, of adapt-

ing means to ends. In the earlier chapters of this book we have been considering the material used by the novelist in its relations to the material used by cognate arts, as well as with a view to its adaptability for the structural purposes of the fictionist. We have seen how the elements of character, plot, and setting lend themselves to the moulding imagination of the fiction-writer. We then studied the fiction-writer himself, endeavoring to estimate the influence of his personality upon his conscious or unconscious selection of material. In the chapters devoted to realism and romanticism we saw that these tendencies — these general fashions of envisaging one's material — are to be traced back to the writer's attitude towards life, as well as to the influence of the literary fashions prevailing in different periods of a national literature. We have now to observe the final step in the production of a work of fiction, that is to say, the writer's choice of form, his mastery of language, — in short, his skill in execution. The matter, the man, and the manner; that, for better or worse, has been the order we have followed.

The province of rhetoric.

In analyzing a writer's manner, that is, his personal adaptation of the literary means at his disposal to the end he has in view, we enter upon the territory of rhetoric. It is the students of rhetoric, of style, who have made the clearest exposition of those various kinds of composition which are to be observed in prose fiction. They have furnished special treatises upon "The Literature of Feeling," [1] upon narration [2] and description,[3] and they have illustrated every variety of technical method from the practice of the modern fiction-writer. They have balanced the stylistic advantages and difficulties of such varying fictional forms as the romance and the novel, the allegory and the short story. It is not the purpose of the present chapter to take up such questions in detail. All that I shall endeavor to do is to point out to the serious reader of fiction some of the paths which he may follow, if he will, and then, in the succeeding chapter, to select one typical form of

[1] J. H. Gardiner, *The Forms of Prose Literature.* New York: Scribners.

[2] W. T. Brewster, *Prose Narration.* New York: Holt.

[3] C. S. Baldwin, *Prose Description.* New York: Holt.

fiction, the short story, for more detailed treatment.

The student and the public.

For it is only the reader who takes his fiction rather seriously who is likely to interest himself in questions of form. The great public concerns itself chiefly with the "stuff" of a novel; it simply asks: Does this new book impart any thrills of emotion? Is it interesting? Does it have a good "story"? Does it give a glimpse of people and places worth knowing: Lincoln, Napoleon, Richard the Lion Heart; California, India, London, Paris? Whether the book is "well written," in the technical sense, is a question concerning which the general public is quite indifferent. And it is a wholesome thing for the student of style in fiction to place himself, now and again, frankly on the territory occupied by the great public; to remember that the "stuff" in itself has æsthetic values that are never to be neglected or underrated, that there are sound human reasons for that preference of the untrained public for the "picture that tells a story" over the picture that is simply well painted. I have known novelists to hesitate and agonize over the

question of writing a certain story in the first person or the third person; drafting it now under one form, now under another; rejoicing over the technical opportunities of the autobiographical method, and mourning over its necessary limitations; liking the objective, impartial "third person" point of view, yet finding it perhaps too cold and colorless for that particular story. This is a good example of those questions of pure form in which students of fiction and some writers of fiction take a natural interest, but towards which the public remains blandly indifferent. If "Esmond" is a "good story," thinks the public, what earthly difference does it make whether it is written in the first person or the third person, or now in one and now in the other? The present chapter, however, is written for the comparatively few people who believe that the choice of form is significant, as bearing upon the total impression made by the story.

The infinite variety of forms.

But it should be remembered, in the first place, that the forms of prose fiction are extremely flexible. It is impossible, as we have seen, to apply to them the comparatively rigid rules that are

exemplified in the epic, the lyric, the drama. And even after a general choice of fictional form has been made — let us say, for instance, in favor of the short story rather than the novel as the better artistic medium for the conveyance of a certain idea, a certain impression of life — there are infinite possible modifications of form, due to the varying personal power of expression possessed by different writers. Turgenieff and Mr. Kipling, let us say, will both exercise an unerring instinct in determining that a given theme can be better presented in a dozen pages than in a hundred. But there the similarity of choice ends. The two men have different eyes, minds, hands. The brush-work is not the same; no trained reader can possibly mistake a page of Turgenieff for a page of Kipling. The selection of words, the ordering of sentences, the arrangement of events, reveal the style of the individual workman. The contrast between two works in different *genres* — for instance Trollope's "Barchester Towers" and one of Hardy's "Wessex Tales" — involves not only all those differences in material and in personality which we have already discussed, but countless subtleties of

style, of manner. Such a comparative study implies, on the one hand, a knowledge of the technique of prose fiction considered as an abstract medium of expression, and on the other, the closest scrutiny of the command of language, the individual power over words, possessed by these two writers.

The analysis of style: Minto.

How is the student of fiction to train himself in such analysis? I know of no better method than that followed in such excellent handbooks as Minto's "Manual of English Prose Literature"[1] or Clark's "English Prose Writers."[2] In Professor Minto's book, for example, there are careful studies of representative British authors, who are minutely examined under such headings as Life, Character, and Opinions, in order to insure, first of all, an intelligent knowledge of the man behind the book. Then the Elements of Style are considered: the Vocabulary, its constituents and characteristics, the Sentences and Paragraphs; then the Qualities of Style, such as Simplicity,

[1] William Minto, *A Manual of English Prose Literature.* New York and Boston: Ginn.

[2] J. Scott Clark, *A Study of English Prose Writers: A Laboratory Method.* New York: Scribners.

Clearness, Strength, Pathos, the Ludicrous, Melody, Harmony, Taste. His Figures of Speech are then analyzed and classified, and finally, taking a broader outlook, there is an estimate of the author's accomplishment in the varying kinds of composition, such as Description, Narration, Exposition, and Persuasion.

Clark's laboratory method.

Professor Clark's method of analytic study is similar in aim, although it differs in details. In his own words, "the method consists in determining the particular and distinctive features of a writer's style (using the term "style" in its wide sense), in sustaining that analysis by a very wide consensus of critical opinion, in illustrating the particular characteristics of each writer by voluminous and carefully selected extracts from his works, and in then requiring the pupil to find in the works of the writer parallel illustrations." In the section devoted to Dickens, for example, there is first a brief Biographical Outline, followed by a Bibliography on Dickens's style. Then follows a list of Particular Characteristics as pointed out by competent critics, each characteristic being also illustrated by extracts

from the novels. They are grouped under eleven heads: 1. Fondness for Caricature — Exaggeration — Grotesqueness. 2. Genial Humor. 3. Incarnation of Characteristics — Single Strokes. 4. Descriptive Power — Minuteness of Observation — Vividness. 5. Tender, sometimes Mawkish, Pathos. 6. Gayety — Animal Spirits — Good-Fellowship. 7. Sincerity — Manliness — Earnestness. 8. Broad Sympathy — Plain, Practical Humanity. 9. Dramatic Power. 10. Vulgarity — Artificiality. 11. Diffuseness.

The value of such discipline.

Does all this sound rather schoolmasterish? It is schoolmasterish if done pedantically, with over-literalness, and considered as an end in itself. But it is only by some such exact discipline in the appreciation of a literary product that "we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution." Let the reader take a single book of any of the masters of fiction, and devote a few days or weeks to writing out with the most scrupulous care, such critical notes upon it as Minto and Clark have suggested. He will not only never regret the labor, but unless he is a born pedant, he will

read fiction thereafter with new eyes and a new delight. If he be a born pedant, unwilling to look beyond his own critical categories, unable to see the wood for the trees, then his soul has gone blind already, and a little more rhetorical analysis will not do it any harm.

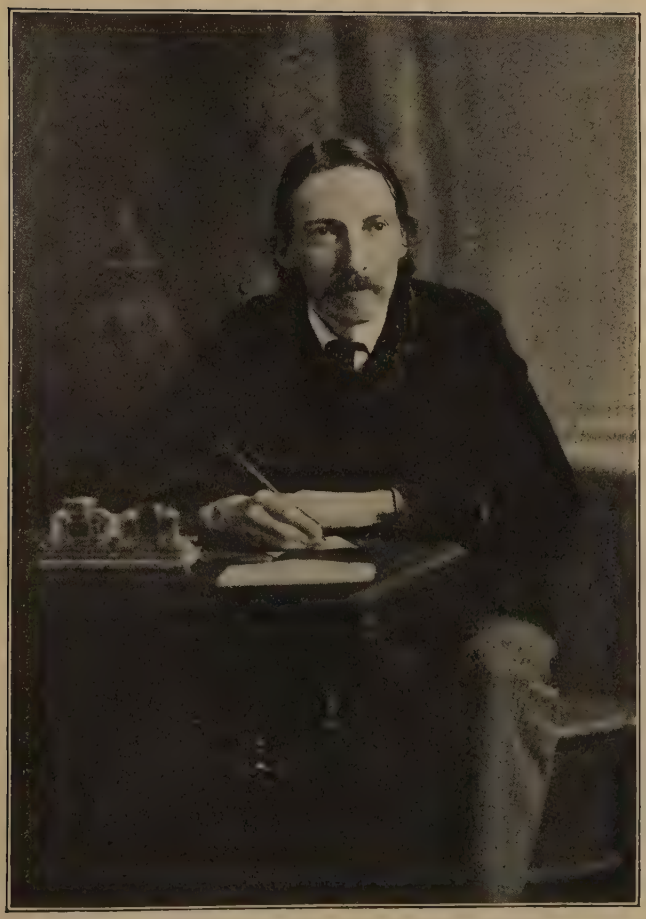
The writer's point of view.

The standpoint of the present chapter, it will be observed, has hitherto been that of the reader of fiction. It is based upon the belief that the pleasure to be derived from novel reading is enhanced in proportion to one's intelligent perception of the nature of the writer's problems and of the skill with which he has overcome them. Let us now shift our point of view, and endeavor to place ourselves in the position of the writer of fiction. Does his understanding of the theory and technique of his art contribute to his practical mastery of it? Understanding is not mastery, of course; yet for all except the geniuses — who may be trusted to find their road across country — it is the straightest path to mastery. It was to some purpose that George Eliot had perfected her theory of fiction at thirty-five, before she had written a line of fiction herself. If the

"young writer" has objectively studied the laws of fiction, as they have been commented upon by such skilled workmen as Mr. Henry James, Stevenson, Bourget, and many more, it is his own fault if he has not gained a clearer knowledge of what he is doing, as well as some measure of inspiration for his task.

What training is necessary?

How far is technical excellence in the composition of fiction a matter of training? It is surely a misconception that no training at all is required, that if "you have it in you," all that is necessary is to take pen and paper and begin. One is about as likely to turn out a great work of fiction by following that programme as he would be to paint a great picture the first time he handled the brush. Yet it is certainly easier to write a tolerable novel the "first time trying" than to paint a tolerable picture. The reason is, obviously, that the artistic medium of fiction, namely, language, is a tool with which all of us are somewhat familiar. And if, besides possessing resources of language one has already trained himself, consciously or unconsciously, in the observation of varied types of character, in vivid narration and description, in the dramatic, the imaginative



Robert Louis Stevenson

way of confronting human life, he may without suspecting it be already a matured novelist in everything except the actual writing of the story. How many letter-writers still possess these gifts in perfection! From this point of view, such famous "first books" as Scott's "Waverley," written at forty-three, Richardson's "Pamela," written at fifty-one, and George Eliot's "Scenes from Clerical Life," written at thirty-five, are not such pertinent examples of "the first time trying" as of the long general preparation for an unforeseen, specific task.

Maturing of hand and mind.

It should be noted, furthermore, that technical excellence in composition is often gained more quickly than the intellectual processes which are also involved in the production of notable fiction. The early work of Thackeray, Hawthorne, Stevenson, and Mr. Kipling is an illustration of the hand maturing before the mind. Hawthorne and Stevenson, in particular, wrote admirable English before they really had anything to say. The ultimate question concerning a novelist is, of course, a two-fold one: What does he have to say? and how does he say it? In the case of many novel-

ists who have achieved great things, the second part of the question can be answered favorably long before one can reply with any confidence to the first. There is a charming story of the youthful Tennyson brothers, Charles and Alfred, to the effect that they stayed at home from church one Sunday, and Charles, the elder, assigned to Alfred the roses in the rectory garden as a subject for a poem. Alfred, who was not many years out of the cradle, obediently filled his slate with verses. Whereupon his elder brother remarked with grave finality, "Alfred, you can write!" That verdict can be rendered upon many men up and down the world to-day, who seem, nevertheless, to find nothing worth writing about. But in the mean time it is something, at least, to be a master of the instrument.

Can the art of fiction be taught?

This may throw some light upon the question first brought before the public by Sir Walter Besant's lecture upon "The Art of Fiction," namely, whether that art can be taught. If by this question one means the technical handling of narration and description as media of expression, it should be answered in the affirmative.

In that sense fiction-writing can be taught, precisely as versification or essay and oration writing are taught. Thousands of young people are practicing it every day in this country, under the eye of competent instructors in rhetoric. How far the pupil may go will naturally depend more upon the pupil himself than upon the mere method of instruction. In the class in "description" there will be now and then a young Daudet, or a Sentimental Tommy with a preternatural instinct for the *mot juste;* and in the class in "narration" some Charles Reade or Clark Russell will exhibit an astounding facility in spinning a yarn. But as a rule this deliberate effort to apprentice one's self to the novel-writing trade gives the "young writer" very much what the "young reader" may also gain from it, that is, merely a quickened perception of the nature of the novelist's craft.

Besant's "Rules for Novel-Writers."

I venture to add without comment Sir Walter Besant's "Rules for Novel-Writers," as an interesting contribution from a writer who has won honorable recognition for his work: 1. Practice writing something original every day. 2.

Cultivate the habit of observation. 3. Work regularly at certain hours. 4. Read no rubbish. 5. Aim at the formation of style. 6. Endeavor to be dramatic. 7. A great element of dramatic skill is selection. 8. Avoid the sin of writing about a character. 9. Never attempt to describe any kind of life except that with which you are familiar. 10. Learn as much as you can about men and women. 11. For the sake of forming a good natural style, and acquiring command of language, write poetry.

Fewer books, and better.

But it may honestly be doubted if these rules, or any rules or course of discipline, will turn a naturally poor workman into a good one. If some one could devise a set of rules that would discourage mediocrity from rushing into print, and reduce the ranks of fiction-writers instead of swelling them, he would deserve well of his generation. What we need, surely, is not more novels, but higher tests of excellence. The training suggested in this chapter is primarily that which helps the reader to discern the good from the bad, the genuine product of thought and passion from the shoddy sentimentality, the empty sound and fury of the

fiction that perishes in a day. That instinct for form which gives the final perfection to a novel cannot be imparted by the study of form; it is born and not made; it comes from some glimpse of enduring beauty as revealed to the true artist soul.

CHAPTER XII

THE SHORT STORY

"For here, at least [in the short story], we have the conditions of perfect art; there is no subdivision of interest; the author can strike directly in, without preface, can move with determined step toward a conclusion, and can — O highest privilege! — stop when he is done."

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

A hint from Thackeray.

THE initial difficulty in discussing the short story is that old danger of taking one's subject either too seriously or else not seriously enough. If one could but hit upon the proper key at the outset, one might possibly hope to edify the strenuous reader, and at the same time to propitiate the frivolous. Let us make certain of our key, therefore, by promptly borrowing one! And we will take our hint as to the real nature of the short story from that indisputable master of the long story, Thackeray. In his "Roundabout Paper" "On a Lazy Idle Boy" there is a picture, all in six lines, of "a score of white-bearded, white-robed warriors, or grave sen-

iors of the city, seated at the gate of Jaffa or Beyrout, and listening to the story-teller reciting his marvels out of The Arabian Nights." That picture, symbol as it was to Thackeray of the story-teller's rôle, may well hover in the background of one's memory as he discourses of the short story as a form of literary art.

Is it a distinct form, with laws and potencies that differentiate it sharply from other types of literature? This question is a sort of turnstile, through which one must wriggle, or over which one must boldly leap, in order to reach our field of investigation. Some of my readers are familiar with a magazine article, written many years ago by Mr. Brander Matthews, entitled "The Philosophy of the Short-Story," and recently revised and issued as a little volume.[1] It will be observed that Professor Matthews spells "short-story" with a hyphen, and claims that the short-story, hyphenated, is something very different from a story that merely happens to be short. It is, he believes, a distinct

Is it a distinct form?

[1] *The Philosophy of the Short-Story.* By Brander Matthews, D. C. L. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1901.

species; an art form by itself; a new literary *genre*, in short, characterized by compression, originality, ingenuity, a touch of fantasy, and by the fact that no love interest is needed to hold its parts together. Mr. Matthews gives pertinent illustrations of these characteristics, and comments in an interesting fashion upon recent British and American examples of the short-story. But one is tempted to ask if the white-bearded, white-robed warriors at the gate of Jaffa were not listening, centuries and centuries ago, to tales marked by compression, originality, ingenuity, a touch of fantasy, and all the other "notes" of this new type of literature.

A new form?

The critical trail blazed so plainly by the professor of dramatic literature at Columbia has been followed by several authors of recent volumes devoted to the modern art of short story writing.[1] But story-telling, surely, is as old as the day when men first gathered round a camp-fire or women huddled in a cave! The study of comparative folk-lore is teaching us every day how universal is the instinct for it. Even were we to leave out of view the literature of

[1] See the Bibliography for the present chapter.

oral tradition, and take the earlier written literature of any European people, — for instance, the tales told by Chaucer and some of his Italian models, — we should find these modern characteristics of originality, ingenuity, and the rest in almost unrivaled perfection, and perhaps come to the conclusion of Chaucer himself, as he exclaims in whimsical despair, "There is no new thing that is not old!" And yet if the question be put point-blank, "Do not such short story writers as Stevenson, Mr. Kipling, Miss Jewett, Bret Harte, Daudet — not to mention Poe and Hawthorne — stand for a new movement, a distinct type of literature?" one is bound to answer "Yes." Here is work that contrasts very strongly, not only with the Italian *novella*, and other mediæval types, but even with the English and American tales of two generations ago. Where lies the difference? For Professor Matthews is surely right in holding that there is a difference. It is safer to trace it, however, not in the external characteristics of this modern work, every feature of which can easily be paralleled in prehistoric myths, but rather in the attitude of the contemporary short

story writer toward his material, and in his conscious effort to achieve under certain conditions a certain effect. And no one has defined this conscious attitude and aim so clearly as Edgar Allan Poe.

Poe's view.

In that perpetually quoted essay upon Hawthorne's "Tales," written in 1842 — one of the earliest and to this day one of the best criticisms of Hawthorne — Poe remarks: —

"Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation — in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And without unity of impression the deepest effects cannot be brought about. . . .

"Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfill the demands of high genius — should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion — I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences — resulting from weariness or interruption.

"A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents, — he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design. And

by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel."

The starting point.

If we assent to Poe's reasoning, we are at once upon firm ground. The short story in prose literature corresponds, then, to the lyric in poetry; like the lyric, its unity of effect turns largely upon its brevity; and as there are well known laws of lyric structure which the lyric poet violates at his peril or obeys to his triumph, so the short story must observe certain conditions and may enjoy certain freedoms that are peculiar to itself. Doubtless our professional story-tellers seated before the gate of Jaffa or Beyrout had ages ago a naïve, instinctive apprehension of these principles of their art; but it is equally true that the story-writers of our own day, profiting by the accumulated experience of the race, responding quickly to international literary influences, prompt to learn from and to imitate one another, are consciously, and no doubt self-consciously, studying their art as it has never been studied

before. Every magazine brings new experiments in method, or new variations of the old themes; and it would speak ill for the intelligence of these workmen if there could be no registration of results. Some such registration may, at any rate, be attempted without being unduly dogmatic, and without making one's pleasure in a short story too solemn and heart-searching an affair.

Characters, plot, and setting.

Every work of fiction, long or short, depends for its charm and power — as we have already seen — upon one or all of three elements: the characters, the plot, and the setting. Here are certain persons, doing certain things, in certain circumstances; and the fiction-writer tells us about one or another or all three of these phases of his theme. Sometimes he creates vivid characters, but does not know what to do with them; sometimes he invents very intricate and thrilling plots, but the men and women remain nonentities; sometimes he lavishes his skill on the background, the *milieu*, the manners and morals of the age, the all-enveloping natural forces or historic movements, while his heroes and heroines are

hurriedly pushed here and there into place, like dolls at a dolls' tea-party. But the masters of fiction, one need hardly say, know how to beget men and women, and to make them march toward events, with the earth beneath their feet and overhead the sky.

Character-drawing.

Suppose we turn to the first of these three potential elements of interest and ask what are the requirements of the short story as regards the delineation of character. Looking at the characters alone, and not, for the moment, at the plot or the setting, is there any difference between the short story and the novel? There is this very obvious difference: if it is a character-story at all, the characters must be unique, original enough to catch the eye at once. Everybody knows that in a novel a commonplace person may be made interesting by a deliberate, patient exposition of his various traits, precisely as we can learn to like very uninteresting persons in real life if circumstances place them day after day at our elbows. Who of us would not grow impatient with the early chapters of "The Newcomes," for instance, or "The Antiquary," if it were not for our faith that Thackeray and Scott

know their business, and that every one of those commonplace people will contribute something in the end to the total effect? And even where the gradual development of character, rather than the mere portrayal of character, is the theme of a novelist, as so frequently with George Eliot, how colorless may be the personality at the outset, how narrow the range of thought and experience portrayed! Yet, in George Eliot's own words, "these commonplace people have a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right." They take on dignity from their moral struggle, whether the struggle ends in victory or defeat. By an infinite number of subtle touches they are made to grow and change before our eyes, like living, fascinating things.

Swift development.

But all this takes time, — far more time than is at the disposal of the short story writer. If his special theme be the delineation of character, he dare not choose colorless characters; if his theme is character-development, then that development must be hastened by striking experiences, — like a plant forced in a hothouse instead of left to the natural conditions of sun and

cloud and shower. For instance, if it be a love story, the hero and heroine must begin their decisive battle at once, without the advantage of a dozen chapters of preliminary skirmishing. If the hero is to be made into a villain or a saint, the chemistry must be of the swiftest; that is to say, unusual forces are brought to bear upon somewhat unusual personalities. It is an interesting consequence of this necessity for choosing the exceptional rather than the normal that, so far as the character-element is concerned, the influence of the modern short story is thrown upon the side of romanticism rather than of realism.

Plot alone will serve.

And yet it is by no means necessary that the short story should depend upon character-drawing for its effect. If its plot be sufficiently entertaining, comical, novel, thrilling, the characters may be the merest lay figures and yet the story remain an admirable work of art. Poe's tales of ratiocination, as he loved to call them, like "The Gold-Bug," "The Purloined Letter," or his tales of pseudo-science, like "A Descent into the Maelstrom," are dependent for none of their power upon any interest attaching to character. The exercise of the pure

logical faculty, or the wonder and the terror of the natural world, gives scope enough for that consummate craftsman. We have lately lost one of the most ingenious and delightful of American story-writers, whose tales of whimsical predicament illustrate this point very perfectly. Given the conception of "Negative Gravity," what comic possibilities unfold themselves, quite without reference to the personality of the experimenter! I should be slow to assert that the individual idiosyncrasies of the passengers aboard that remarkable vessel, The Thomas Hyke, do not heighten the effect produced by their singular adventure, but they are not the essence of it. "The Lady or the Tiger?" remains a perpetual riddle, does it not, precisely because it asks: "What would *a woman* do in that predicament?" Not what this particular barbarian princess would do, for the author cunningly neglected to give her any individualized traits. We know nothing about her; so that there are as many answers to the riddle as there are women in the world. We know tolerably well what choice would be made in those circumstances by a specific woman like Becky Sharp or Dorothea

Casaubon or Little Em'ly; but to affirm what *a woman* would decide? Ah, no; Mr. Stockton was quite too clever to attempt that.

Obliteration of personal traits.

Precisely the same obliteration of personal traits is to be noted in some tales involving situations that are meant to be taken very seriously indeed. The reader will recall Poe's story of the Spanish Inquisition, entitled "The Pit and the Pendulum." The unfortunate victim of the inquisitors lies upon his back, strapped to the stone floor of his dungeon. Directly above him is suspended a huge pendulum, a crescent of glittering steel, razor-edged, which at every sweep to and fro lowers itself inch by inch towards the helpless captive. As he lies there, gazing frantically upon the terrific oscillations of that hissing steel, struggling, shrieking, or calculating with the calmness of despair, Poe paints with extraordinary vividness his sensations and his thoughts. But who is he? He is nobody — anybody, — he is John Doe or Richard Roe, — he is *man* under mortal agony — not a particular man; he has absolutely no individuality, save possibly in the ingenuity by means of

which he finally escapes. I should not wish to imply that this is a defect in the story. By no means. Poe has wrought out, no doubt, precisely the effect he intended: the situation itself is enough without any specific characterization; and yet suppose we had Daniel Deronda strapped to that floor, or Mr. Micawber, or Terence Mulvaney? At any rate, the sensations and passions and wily stratagems of these distinct personalities would be more interesting than the emotions of Poe's lay figure. The novelist who should place them there would be bound to tell us what they — and no one else — would feel and do in that extremity of anguish. Not to tell us would be to fail to make the most of the artistic possibilities of the situation. Poe's task, surely, was much less complex. "The Pit and the Pendulum" is perfect in its way; but if the incident had been introduced into a novel, a different perfection would have been demanded.

The background.

Nor is it otherwise if we turn to that third element of effect in fiction; namely, the circumstances or events enveloping the characters and action of the tale. The nature of the short story is such

that both characters and action may be almost without significance, provided the atmosphere — the place and time — the background — is artistically portrayed. Here is the source of the perennial pleasure to be found in Mr. P. Deming's simple "Adirondack Stories." If the author can discover to us a new corner of the world, or sketch the familiar scene to our heart's desire, or illumine one of the great human occupations, as war, or commerce, or industry, he has it in his power, through this means alone, to give us the fullest satisfaction. The modern feeling for landscape, the modern curiosity about social conditions, the modern æsthetic sense for the characteristic rather than for the beautiful as such, all play into the short story writer's hands. Many a reader, no doubt, takes up Miss Wilkins's stories, not because he cares much about the people in them or what the people do, but just to breathe for twenty minutes the New England air — if in truth that be the New England air! You may even have homesickness for a place you have never seen, — some Delectable Duchy in Cornwall, a window in Thrums, a Californian mining camp deserted before you

were born, — and Mr. Quiller Couch, or Mr. Barrie, or Bret Harte will take you there, and that is all you ask of them. The popularity which Stephen Crane's war stories enjoyed for a season was certainly not due to his characters, for his personages had no character — not even names — nor to the plot, for there was none. But the sights and sounds and odors and colors of War — as Crane imagined War — were plastered upon his vacant-minded heroes as you would stick a poster to a wall, and the trick was done. In other words, the setting was sufficient to produce the intended effect.

The blending of these modes.

It is true, of course, that many stories, and these perhaps of the highest rank, avail themselves of all three of these modes of impression. Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp," Mr. Cable's "Posson Jone," Mr. Aldrich's "Marjorie Daw," Mr. Kipling's "The Man who would be King," Miss Jewett's "The Queen's Twin," Miss Wilkins's "A New England Nun," Dr. Hale's "The Man without a Country," present people and events and circumstances, blended into an artistic whole, that defies analysis. But because we some-

times receive full measure, pressed down and running over, we should not forget that the cup of delight may be filled in a simpler and less wonderful way.

Opportunities afforded to the writer.

This thought suggests the consideration of another aspect of our theme; namely, the opportunity which the short story, as a distinct type of literature, gives to the writer. We have seen indirectly that it enables him to use all his material, to spread before us any hints in the fields of character or action or setting which his notebook may contain. Mr. Henry James's stories very often impress one as chips from the workshop where his novels were built, — or, to use a less mechanical metaphor, as an exploration of a tempting side path, of whose vistas he had caught a passing glimpse while pursuing some of his retreating and elusive major problems. It is obvious, likewise, that the short story gives a young writer most valuable experience at the least loss of time. He can tear up and try again. Alas, if he only would do so a little oftener! He can test his fortune with the public through the magazines, without waiting to write his immortal book. For

older men in whom the creative impulse is comparatively feeble, or manifested at long intervals only, the form of the short story makes possible the production of a small quantity of highly finished work. But these incidental advantages to the author himself are not so much to our present purpose as are certain artistic opportunities which his strict limits of space allow him.

Didacticism.

In the brief tale, then, he may be didactic without wearying his audience. Not to entangle one's self in the interminable question about the proper limits of didacticism in the art of fiction, one may assert that it is at least as fair to say to the author, "You may preach if you wish, but at your own risk," as it is to say to him, "You shall not preach at all, because I do not like to listen." Most of the greater English fiction-writers, at any rate, have the homiletic habit. Dangerous as this habit is, uncomfortable as it makes us feel to get a sermon instead of a story, there is sometimes no great harm in a sermonette. "This is not a tale exactly. It is a tract," are the opening words of one of Mr. Kipling's stories, and the tale is no worse — and likewise, it is true, no

better — for its profession of a moral purpose. Many a tract, in this generation so suspicious of its preachers, has disguised itself as a short story, and made good reading, too. For that matter, not to grow quite unmindful of our white-robed, white-bearded company sitting all this time by the gate of Jaffa, there is a very pretty moral even in the artless tale of Aladdin's Lamp.

Posing problems.

The story-writer, furthermore, has this advantage over the novelist, that he can pose problems without answering them. When George Sand and Charles Dickens wrote novels to exhibit certain defects in the organization of human society, they not only stated their case, but they had their triumphant solution of the difficulty. So it has been with the drama, until very recently. The younger Dumas had his own answer for every one of his problem-plays. But with Ibsen came the fashion of staging the question at issue, in unmistakable terms, and not even suggesting that one solution is better than another. "Here are the facts for you," says Ibsen; "here are the modern emotions for you; my work is done." In precisely similar fashion does

a short story writer like Maupassant fling the facts in our face, brutally, pitilessly. We may make what we can of them; it is nothing to him. He poses his grim problem with surpassing skill, and that is all. A novel written in this way grows intolerable, and one may suspect that the contemporary problem-novel is apt to be such an unspeakable affair, not merely for its dubious themes and more than dubious style, but because it reveals so little power to "lay" the ghosts it raises.

Arbitrary premises.

Again, the short story writer is always asking us to take a great deal for granted. He begs to be allowed to state his own premises. He portrays, for instance, some marital comedy or tragedy, ingeniously enough. We retort, "Yes; but how could he have ever fallen in love with her in the first place?" "Oh," replies the author off-hand, "that is another story." But if he were a novelist, he would not get off so easily. He might have to write twenty chapters, and go back three generations, to show why his hero fell in love with her in the first place. All that any fiction can do — very naturally — is to give us, as we com-

monly say, a mere cross-section of life. There are endless antecedents and consequents with which it has no concern; but the cross-section of the story-writer is so much thinner that he escapes a thousand inconveniences, and even then considers it beneath him to explain his miracles.

Omission of unlovely details.

What is more, the laws of brevity and unity of effect compel him to omit, in his portrayal of life and character, many details that are unlovely. Unless, like some very gifted fiction-writers of our time, he makes a conscientious search for the repulsive, it is easy for him to paint a pleasant picture. Bret Harte's earliest stories show this happy instinct for the æsthetic, for touching the sunny places in the lives of extremely disreputable men. His gamblers are exhibited in their charming mood; his outcasts are revealed to us at the one moment of self-denying tenderness which insures our sympathy. Such a selective method is perfectly legitimate and necessary; "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" each contains but slightly more than four thousand words. All art is selective, for that matter; but were a novelist to

take the personages of those stories and exhibit them as full-length figures, he would be bound to tell more of the truth about them, unpleasant as some of the details would be. Otherwise he would paint life in a wholly wrong perspective. Bret Harte's master, Charles Dickens, did not always escape this temptation to juggle with the general truth of things; the pupil escaped it, in these early stories at least, simply because he was working on a different scale.

The horrible.

The space limits of the short story allow its author likewise to make artistic use of the horrible, the morbid, the dreadful — subjects too poignant to give any pleasure if they were forced upon the attention throughout a novel. "The Black Cat," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "A Descent into the Maelstrom," are admirable examples of Poe's art; but he was too skillful a workman not to know that that sort of thing if it be done at all must be done quickly. Four hundred pages of "The Black Cat" would be impossible.

Impressionism.

And last in our list of the distinct advantages of the art form we are considering is the fact that it allows

a man to make use of the vaguest suggestions, a delicate symbolism, a poetic impressionism, fancies too tenuous to hold in the stout texture of the novel. Wide is the scope of the art of fiction; it includes even this borderland of dreams. Poe's marvelous "Shadow, a Parable," "Silence, a Fable;" Hawthorne's "The Hollow of the Three Hills," or "The Snow-Image;" many a prose poem that might be cited from French and Russian writers, — these illustrate the strange beauty and mystery of those twilight places where the vagrant imagination hovers for a moment and flutters on.

The underlying principle.

It will be seen that all of the opportunities that have been enumerated — the opportunity, namely, for innocent didacticism, for posing problems without answering them, for stating arbitrary premises, for omitting unlovely details and, conversely, for making beauty out of the horrible, and finally for poetic symbolism — are connected with the fact that in the short story the powers of the reader are not kept long upon the stretch. The reader shares in the large liberty which the short story affords to the author. This type of prose literature,

like the lyric in poetry, is such an old, and simple, and free mode of expressing the artist's personality! As long as men are interesting to one another, as long as the infinite complexities of modern emotion play about situations that are as old as the race, so long will there be an opportunity for the free development of the short story as a literary form.

What it demands: imagination.

Is there anything to be said upon the other side? Are the distinct advantages of this art form accompanied by any strict conditions, upon conformity to which success depends? For the brief tale demands, of one who would reach the foremost skill in it, two or three qualities that are really very rare.

It calls for visual imagination of a high order: the power to see the object; to penetrate to its essential nature; to select the one characteristic trait by which it may be represented. A novelist informs you that his heroine, let us say, is seated in a chair by the window. He tells you what she looks like: her attitude, figure, hair and eyes, and so forth. He can do this, and very often seems

to do it, without really seeing that individual woman or making us see her. His trained pencil merely sketches some one of the same general description, of about the equivalent hair and eyes, and so forth, seated by that general kind of window. If he does not succeed in making her real to us in that pose, he has a hundred other opportunities before the novel ends. Recall how George Eliot pictures Dorothea in "Middlemarch," now in this position, now in that. If one scene does not present her vividly to us, the chances are that another will, and in the end, it is true, we have an absolutely distinct image of her. The short story writer, on the other hand, has but the one chance. His task, compared with that of the novelist, is like bringing down a flying bird with one bullet, instead of banging away with a whole handful of birdshot and having another barrel in reserve. Study the descriptive epithets in Stevenson's short stories. How they bring down the object! What an eye! And what a hand! No adjective that does not paint a picture or record a judgment! And if it were not for a boyish habit of showing off his skill and doing trick shots for us out

of mere superfluity of cleverness, what judge of marksmanship would refuse Master Robert Louis Stevenson the prize?

Style.

An imagination that penetrates to the very heart of the matter; a verbal magic that recreates for us what the imagination has seen, — these are the tests of the tale-teller's genius. A novel may be high up in the second rank — like Trollope's and Bulwer-Lytton's — and lack somehow the literary touch. But the only short stories that survive the year or the decade are those that have this verbal finish, — "fame's great antiseptic, style." To say that a short story at its best should have imagination and style is simple enough. To hunt through the magazines of any given month and find such a story is a very different matter. Out of the hundreds of stories printed every week in every civilized country, why do so few meet the supreme tests? To put it bluntly, does this form of literature present peculiar attractions to mediocrity?

What it fails to demand: sustained power.

For answer, let us look at some of the qualities which the short story fails to demand from those who use it. It will account in part for the number of short stories written.

Very obviously, to write a short story requires no sustained power of imagination. So accomplished a critic as Mr. Henry James believes that this is a purely artificial distinction; he thinks that if you can imagine at all, you can keep it up. Ruskin went even farther. Every feat of the imagination, he declared, is easy for the man who performs it: the great feat is possible only to the great artist; yet if he can do it at all, he can do it easily. But as a matter of fact, does not the power required to hold steadily before you your theme and personages and the whole little world where the story moves correspond somewhat to the strength it takes to hold out a dumb-bell? Any one can do it for a few seconds; but in a few more seconds the arm sags; it is only the trained athlete who can endure even to the minute's end. For Hawthorne to hold the people of "The Scarlet Letter" steadily in focus from November to February, to say nothing of six years' preliminary brooding, is surely more of an artistic feat than to write a short story between Tuesday and Friday. The three years and nine months of unremitting labor devoted to "Middlemarch"

does not in itself afford any criterion of the value of the book; but given George Eliot's brain power and artistic instinct to begin with, and then concentrate them for that period upon a single theme, and it is no wonder that the result is a masterpiece. "Jan van Eyck was never in a hurry," says Charles Reade of the great Flemish painter in "The Cloister and the Hearth," — "Jan van Eyck was never in a hurry, and therefore the world will not forget him in a hurry." This sustained power of imagination, and the patient workmanship that keeps pace with it, are not demanded by the brief tale. It is a short distance race, and any one can run it indifferently well.

Sanity.

Nor does the short story demand of its author essential sanity, breadth, and tolerance of view. How morbid does the genius of a Hoffmann, a Poe, a Maupassant seem when placed alongside the sane and wholesome art of Scott and Fielding and Thackeray! Sanity, balance, naturalness; the novel stands or falls, in the long run, by these tests. But your short story writer may be fit for a madhouse and yet compose tales that shall be immortal. In other words, we

do not ask of him that he shall have a philosophy of life, in any broad, complete sense. It may be that Professor Masson, like a true Scotchman, insisted too much upon the intellectual element in the art of fiction when he declared, "Every artist is a thinker whether he knows it or not, and ultimately no artist will be found greater as an artist than he was as a thinker." But he points out here what must be the last of the distinctions we have drawn between the short story and the novel. When we read "Old Mortality," or "Pendennis," or "Daniel Deronda," we find in each book a certain philosophy, "a chart, or plan of human life." Consciously or unconsciously held or formulated, it is nevertheless there. The novelist has his theory of this general scheme of things which enfolds us all, and he cannot write his novel without betraying his theory. "He is a thinker whether he knows it or not."

Deals with fragments.

But the short story writer, with all respect to him, need be nothing of the sort. He deals not with wholes, but with fragments; not with the trend of the great march through the wide world, but with some particular aspect of the procession as it passes.

His story may be, as we have seen, the merest sketch of a face, a comic attitude, a tragic incident; it may be a lovely dream, or a horrid nightmare, or a page of words that haunt us like music. Yet he need not be consistent; he need not think things through. One might almost maintain that there is more of an answer, implicit or explicit, to the great problems of human destiny in one book like "Vanity Fair" or "Adam Bede" than in all of Mr. Kipling's one hundred and sixty short stories taken together — and Mr. Kipling is perhaps the most gifted story-teller of our time.

Easy literature.

Does not all this throw some light upon the present popularity of the short story with authors and public alike? Here is a form of literature easy to write and easy to read. The author is often paid as much for a story as he earns from the copyrights of a novel, and it costs him one tenth the labor. The multiplication of magazines and other periodicals creates a constant market, with steadily rising prices. The qualities of imagination and style that go to the making of a first-rate short story are as rare as they ever were, but one is sometimes

tempted to think that the great newspaper and magazine reading public bothers itself very little about either style or imagination. The public pays its money and takes its choice. And there are other than these mechanical and commercial reasons why the short story now holds the field. It is a kind of writing perfectly adapted to our overdriven generation, which rushes from one task or engagement to another, and between times, or on the way, snatches up a story. Our habit of nervous concentration for a brief period helps us indeed to crowd a great deal of pleasure into the half-hour of perusal; our incapacity for prolonged attention forces the author to keep within that limit, or exceed it at his peril.

Affecting other forms.

It has been frequently declared that this popularity of the short story is unfavorable to other forms of imaginative literature. Many English critics have pointed out that the reaction against the three-volume novel, and particularly against George Eliot, has been caused by the universal passion for the short story. And the short story is frequently made responsible for the alleged distaste of Americans for the

essay. We are told that nobody reads magazine poetry, because the short stories are so much more interesting.

Does anybody know?

In the presence of all such brisk generalizations, it is prudent to exercise a little wholesome skepticism. No one really knows. Each critic can easily find the sort of facts he is looking for. American short stories have probably trained the public to a certain expectation of technical excellence in narrative which has forced American novel-writers to do more careful work. But there are few of our novel-writers who exhibit a breadth and power commensurate with their opportunities, and it is precisely these qualities of breadth and power which an apprenticeship to the art of short story writing seldom or never seems to impart. The wider truth, after all, is that literary criticism has no apparatus delicate enough to measure the currents, the depths and the tideways, the reactions and interactions of literary forms. Essays upon the evolution of literary types, when written by men like M. Brunetière, are fascinating reading, and for the moment almost persuade you that there is such a thing as a real evolution of types, that is,

a definite replacement of a lower form by a higher. But the popular caprice of an hour upsets all your theories. Mr. Howells had no sooner proved, a few years ago, that a certain form of realism was the finally evolved type in fiction, than the great reading public promptly turned around and bought "Treasure Island." That does not prove "Treasure Island" a better story than "Silas Lapham;" it proves simply that a trout that will rise to a brown hackle to-day will look at nothing but a white miller to-morrow; and that when the men of the ice age grew tired of realistic anecdotes somebody yawned and poked the fire and called on a romanticist. One age, one stage of culture, one mood, calls for stories as naïve, as grim and primitive in their stark savagery as an Icelandic saga; another age, another mood, — nay, the whim that changes in each one of us between morning and evening, — chooses stories as deliberately, consciously artificial as "The Fall of the House of Usher." Both types are admirable, each in its own way, provided both stir the imagination. For the types will come and go and come again; but the human hunger for fiction of some sort is never sated.

Study the historical phases of the art of fiction as closely as one may, there come moments — and perhaps the close of an essay is an appropriate time to confess it — when one is tempted to say with Wilkie Collins that the whole art of fiction can be summed up in three precepts: "Make 'em laugh; make 'em cry; make 'em wait."

The wonder-world.

The important thing, the really suggestive and touching and wonderful thing, is that all these thousands of contemporary and ephemeral stories are laughed over and cried over and waited for by somebody. They are read, while the "large still books" are bound in full calf and buried. Do you remember Pomona in "Rudder Grange" reading aloud in the kitchen every night after she had washed the dishes, spelling out with blundering tongue and beating heart: "Yell — after — yell — resounded — as — he — wildly — sprang," — or "Ha — ha — Lord — Marmont — thundered — thou — too — shalt — suffer"? We are all more or less like Pomona. We are children at bottom, after all is said, children under the story-teller's charm. Nansen's stout-hearted comrades tell stories to one another

while the Arctic ice drifts onward with the Fram; Stevenson is nicknamed The Tale-Teller by the brown-limbed Samoans; Chinese Gordon reads a story while waiting — hopelessly waiting — at Khartoum. What matter who performs the miracle that opens for us the doors of the wonder-world? It may be one of that white-bearded company at the gate of Jaffa; it may be an ardent French boy pouring out his heart along the bottom of a Paris newspaper; it may be some sober-suited New England woman in the decorous pages of "The Atlantic Monthly;" it may be some wretched scribbler writing for his supper. No matter, if only the miracle is wrought; if we look out with new eyes upon the many-featured, habitable world; if we are thrilled by the pity and the beauty of this life of ours, itself brief as a tale that is told; if we learn to know men and women better, and to love them more.

CHAPTER XIII

PRESENT TENDENCIES OF AMERICAN FICTION.

"The literature of a people should be the record of its joys and sorrows, its aspirations and its shortcomings, its wisdom and its folly, the confidant of its soul. We cannot say that our own as yet suffices us, but I believe that he who stands, a hundred years hence, where I am standing now, conscious that he speaks to the most powerful and prosperous community ever devised or developed by man, will speak of our literature with the assurance of one who beholds what we hope for and aspire after, become a reality and a possession forever."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, *Our Literature.* (1889.)

"Democracy in literature, as exemplified by the two great modern democrats in letters, Whitman and Tolstoi, means a new and more deeply religious way of looking at mankind, as well as at all the facts and objects of the visible world. It means, furthermore, the finding of new artistic motives and values in the people, in science and the modern spirit, in liberty, fraternity, equality, in the materialism and industrialism of man's life as we know it in our day and land — the carrying into imaginative fields the quality of common humanity, that which it shares with real things and with all open-air nature, with hunters, farmers, sailors, and real workers in all fields."

JOHN BURROUGHS, *Democracy and Literature.*

Difficulties of an adequate survey.

IN concluding this study of the art of prose fiction, let me attempt a survey of the present tendencies

of the fiction of our own country. It goes without saying that such a survey presents difficulties of no ordinary kind. The field at which one must glance is so vast, the varieties of production are so numerous, the characteristics of the phenomena to be examined so changeable in their nature from year to year, that anything like an exact appreciation of our national fiction is out of the question. One must content himself with suggestions, rather than with any detailed exposition; with a statement of some of the conditions that enter into the question, rather than with any elaborate attempt at reaching a fixed formula.

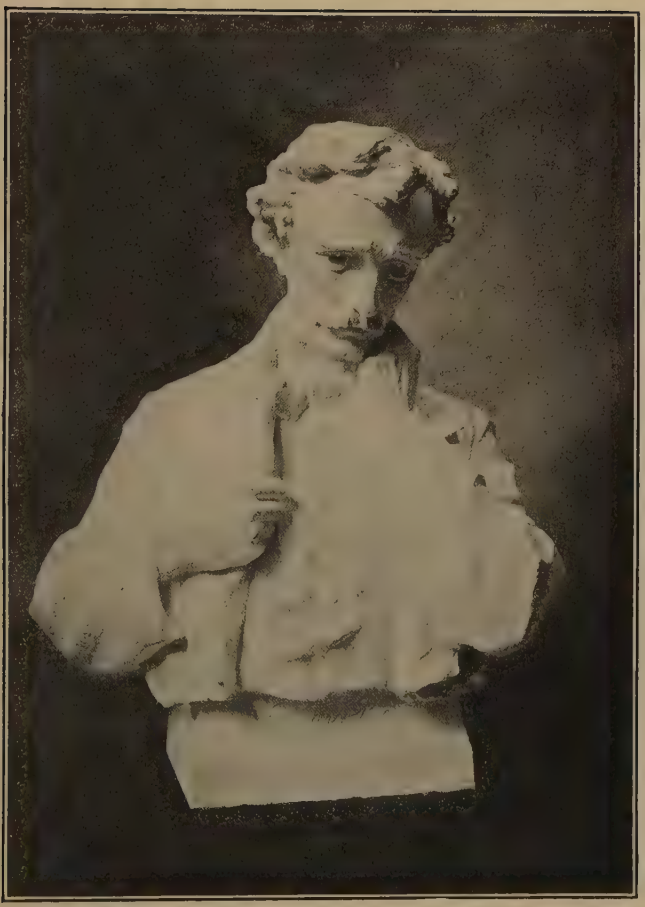
A knowledge of the past.

One danger should be avoided at the outset — a danger never so insistent in its pressure as at present — the danger, namely, of being too contemporaneous in one's point of view. Even in trying to take account of contemporary tendencies, a historic sense is the most valuable equipment for the task of criticism. A knowledge of what has been already accomplished in the world of fiction is essential if one is to have any sense of perspective, any power of valuing new claimants to the honors of the craft.

The heavens are full of literary comets in these days, and their course can be measured only by reference to the fixed stars. Those trite sentences of advice to young readers, "When a new book comes out, read an old one," "Read no book until it is fifty years old," were never more applicable than now, and in the field of fiction. The multiplication of periodicals issued in the interest of publishing houses, and for very practical reasons devoted to the glorification of new writers more or less at the expense of old ones, the personal gossip about the literary heroes of the hour, tend to confuse all one's ideas of proportion. A people gifted, like ourselves, with a sense of humor will sooner or later discount the extravagant adjectives used in the commercial exploitation of new books. But meanwhile there is a mischief in it all; and the mischief is that the mind of the reading public is systematically journalized. The little men, by dint of keeping their names before us, pass in many quarters for great men. The historic sense is bewildered, benumbed; and when we attempt an appreciation of fiction-writers and of the art of fiction itself our opinions are sadly contemporaneous.

Go back fifty years.

Before our judgment of a current book or a current tendency can have any particular value, we must understand the work of American novelists for at least the last half century. And it is a somewhat curious fact that if we wish to point to American fiction-writers who have won a secure place in the world's literature, we must go back fifty years or more to find our men. When an intelligent foreign critic asks us what writers of fiction America has to show, of quality and force worthy to be compared with the masters of the art elsewhere, whom can we name? Fenimore Cooper for one: the author of "The Leather Stocking Tales," "The Spy," and "The Pilot;" the creator of Natty Bumppo, and Chingachgook, and Long Tom Coffin. His rank is unquestioned. And so is the rank of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who has a reserved seat for immortality if any one has. And there is a third candidate for universal honors, a short story writer, Edgar Allan Poe. Hawthorne, Cooper, Poe; these men are beyond the need and the reach of literary log-rolling.



Edgar A. Poe.

The other names.

But when we have mentioned these three Americans, we have nearly or quite exhausted, not indeed our riches in native fiction, but the roll-call of those who by common consent have won through the art of fiction a permanent fame. Irving's reputation is rather that of an essayist, pioneer in a certain field of fiction though he was. One would hesitate to place beside the names of Cooper, Hawthorne, and Poe the name of the author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," although no American book has ever had so wide a vogue in other countries, or wakened such intense emotion in our own. Bret Harte would have some suffrages, no doubt; and many a critic would linger inquiringly and affectionately over the names of Mark Twain, Howells, Aldrich, Stockton, James, Cable, Crawford, and many another living writer of admirable workmanship and honorable rank. But I suppose that there are few critics who would deliberately select among these later men a fourth to be placed in equality of universal recognition with that great trio who more than half a century ago were in the fullness of their power.

Quantity and quality.

However, three such men are enough to give distinction to the first hundred years of American fiction-writing. If we institute a comparison in quality between American and English and Continental fiction, we have simply to point to Hawthorne alone. In bulk his contribution to the world's pleasure in the form of books is slender when set alongside the volumes of Scott or Dickens or Dumas, but in point of quality the quiet New Englander is easily the peer of the greatest story-writers of the world. Even when judged by the more unsatisfactory test of quantity of production, American fiction can nearly or quite hold its own with the fiction of England, France, or Germany. The figures of the book market, while interesting enough to the curious minded, are vitiated, for one who is trying to estimate the American output of fiction, by the fact of the immense circulation of some novels which are literature only by courtesy, but which affect statistics just as much as if they were literature. If we apply the test of mere quantity of production, we must take into account not only all these books that are "borderland dwellers" between literature

and non-literature, but an immense supply of fiction that does not even pretend to be literature any more than a clever space-reporter for a Sunday newspaper pretends that his work is literature. But putting all such books aside, it is still possible to select twenty or twenty-five American story-writers of the past forty years who have published enough good books to place American fiction well alongside of American poetry, and certainly far in advance of American music, painting, sculpture, or architecture.

Prevalent tendencies: novel of the soil.

From this body of work is it possible to draw any conclusions as to the character of our fiction? Can we indicate the tendencies which have been prevalent in the past, which are now operative, and which consequently are likely to characterize to a greater or less extent the American novel of the future? There are at least three tendencies to which attention should be drawn. I cannot do better than follow here the suggestions of Professor Richardson,[1] who thinks that the first is the production of novels of the soil, that is, the

[1] Charles F. Richardson, *American Literature.* 2 vols. New York: Putnam, 1889.

presentation of American types and scenes. The service of Fenimore Cooper in this direction was a most important one. Before his time, Brockden Brown, for instance, had treated American themes, yet in so romantic a fashion as to disguise the reality. But Fenimore Cooper's backwoodsmen and sailors and frontier landscapes have the verity of nature herself. Hawthorne, too, did for New England, by very different methods, but with an equal honesty of rendering, what Cooper did for northern New York. Before the war, notes Professor Richardson, there were few attempts to delineate American home life in the various sections of the country; but the improvement in American minor fiction since 1861 is largely owing to the attempt to describe American life as it is. This tendency is growing more and more marked with every year; it is very little, if at all, affected by the present revival of romanticism; it has been helped, rather than hindered, by the sudden crop of historical novels. If every American county has not its novelist, its painter of manners, — as Scotland is said to have had, — at least every state can show fiction-writers who aim to delineate local conditions as

faithfully as they may, and there is every reason for thinking that this movement will be permanent.

Excellence in a limited field.

A second characteristic which has hitherto marked American fiction, and one that follows closely upon the first, is its excellence in a limited field, rather than any largeness of creative activity. The qualities which a foreign critic would be inclined to postulate theoretically about our fiction, reasoning from our immense territory, our still youthful zest, our boundless faith in ourselves, our resources, — in short, the general "bigness" of things American, — are precisely the qualities which our fiction has hitherto lacked. Instead of fertility of resource, consciousness of power, great canvases, broad strokes, brilliant coloring, we find a predominance of small canvases, minute though admirable detail, neutral tints, an almost academic restraint, a consciousness of painting under the critic's eye. American fiction lacks breadth and power. What Walt Whitman tried, with very imperfect success one must admit, to do in the field of "All-American" poetry, if I may use the phrase, no one has even attempted to do in

fiction. Some magazine critics have expressed the opinion that the cause of this is to be found in the fact that the conventional standards, the critical atmosphere, of the effete Atlantic seaboard have hitherto been dominant in our literature. They profess to believe that when the "literary centre" of the country is established at Chicago, or Indianapolis, or thereabouts, our fiction will assume a scale proportionate to the bigness of our continent. But this matter is not so simple as it looks, and the question whether excellence in a small way rather than largeness of creative activity will continue to characterize American fiction is still to be solved. We may find some light thrown upon it in considering the relation of sectional to national fiction.

Fundamental morality.

A third fact impressed upon the student of the American novel is its fundamental morality. It is optimistic. Its outlook upon life is wholesome. The stain of doubtful morality or flaring immorality which has often tinged English and Continental fiction, and made both the English and the American stage at times unspeakably foul, has left scarcely any imprint as yet upon the better known American story-writers.

Our greater magazines have remained for the most part unsoiled. Bad as our "yellow" newspapers are, brazen as our stage often is, people who want the sex-novel, and want it prepared with any literary skill, have to import it from across the water. The outlook for the morality of the distinctively American novel seems assured. If our professional novelists have, in the last five years, withstood the temptation to win notoriety and money by *risqué* books, we can confidently say of the American fiction of the future, that while it may not be national, and may not be great, it will have at least the negative virtue of being clean.

The "representative" book.

We are now in a position to estimate the conditions which must be met by an American writer who hopes that his books may be in some true sense representative of the national life. Why does not the "great American novel" which we talk about, and about which we prophesy, get itself written? One difficulty in the path of the representative American novel has already been pointed out indirectly. It lies in the immensity of the field

to be covered; the complexity of the phenomena which literature must interpret; the mixture of races, customs, traditions, beliefs, ideals, upon this continent. We are a united nation, and have never been more conscious of the national life and more proud of it than since the twentieth century began its course. But literature is an affair of race as well as of nationality. Study the variety of names upon the signboards of any city; watch the varying racial types in the faces of your fellow citizens as you travel east or west, north or south. Who can be an adequate spokesman for all this? Homer is Greece, but Greece was a hand's breadth in comparison with us; Dante is Florence, a single city; Molière, Paris, another city; even Shakespeare, the "myriad-minded," was the spokesman of but one little island, though that was the England of Elizabeth. But the truth is that not one of these men was probably conscious of speaking for his country and his time. It is only a Balzac, a sort of gigantic child, who dares to set himself deliberately to the task of representing all France, and thereby the entire Human Comedy. As civilization widens, as more and more subtle differentiations

make themselves manifest in society, the task becomes increasingly greater. In a Walt Whitman rhapsody a man might venture to speak for "these States," but a writer of prose, in possession of his senses, would perforce decline any such prophetic function.

Sectional fiction.

Then, too, the tendency to the production of sectional fiction, to which allusion has just been made, has prevented our fiction from taking on even the semblance of national quality. By dint of keeping their eyes on the object, many of our best writers have studied but the narrowest of fields. They do not represent, or pretend to represent, with adequacy the entirety even of that limited province for which they stand as representative authors. We speak, for instance, of Mr. Cable, Miss Murfree, Mr. Page, Mr. Allen, Miss Johnston, Mr. Harris, Miss King, and a half dozen more, as representatives of the South in contemporary fiction; but they exhibit as many Souths as there are writers. Who can select any one book of these skilled story-tellers and say, "Here is the South represented through the art of fiction"? Or take New England, as interpreted by such excellent and such different

writers as Mrs. Stowe, Miss Jewett, Miss Wilkins, Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward. Mrs. Stowe shows one New England, Miss Wilkins another; each is marvelously true to the local color selected; but you cannot take "Old Town Folks" and "Deephaven" and "Pembroke" and "A Singular Life" and say "Here is New England." At best you can say "Here is a part of New England." Now if there is a difference in passing from the Vermont or Massachusetts of Miss Wilkins to the Maine of Miss Jewett, think of the difference in passing from these to the Virginia of Mr. Page, the Northwest of Mr. Garland, the California of Bret Harte, the Alaska of Mr. Jack London! If we can scarcely find a thoroughly representative sectional novel, how shall we expect a representative national novel?

International influences.

An additional element in the denationalizing of our fiction lies in the fact that ours is peculiarly a day of international influences in literature. Communication between the book-producing countries of the world is now so easy, the work of foreign authors so accessible, international gossip so entertaining and necessary to us,

that it sometimes seems as if literature were adopting the socialists' programme of doing away with national lines altogether, of creating a vast brotherhood of letters in which the accident of residence in Belgium or Scotland or South Dakota counts for nothing. So far as Continental fiction makes its influence felt in this country, it touches not so much the mass of readers as those who themselves are producers of fiction. In some interesting statistics showing the hundred novels most often drawn from American public libraries, in the order of their popularity, gathered by Mr. Mabie for "The Forum" a few years ago, the absence of modern French and Russian masters from the list was most noticeable. The American public does not read Turgenieff and Tolstoi, Flaubert and Daudet, Björnson and D'Annunzio so very much; indeed it reads them very little. But wherever writers of fiction gather, it is names like these that are discussed. And even for the general public, a book's foreign reputation is impressive, although the book may be little read here. A London reputation, particularly, may make the fortune of a novel on this side of the Atlantic. For all our

talk about outgrowing colonialism, we have never been more colonial than at present, though we call this spirit cosmopolitanism. A very pretty essay might be written to prove that the much-praised cosmopolitanism of some of our successful young novelists is only a sort of varnished provincialism, the real fibre of it differing not so very much from the innocent provincialism of the man who comes back from his first ten weeks' trip abroad and tells you buoyantly that he has "been everywhere and seen everything."

Genuine provincialism.

Now a genuine provincialism, as the history of literature abundantly proves, is not a source of weakness. It is a strength. Carlyle was provincial. Scott was provincial. Burns and Wordsworth and Whittier were provincial. They were rooted in the soil, and by virtue of that they became representative. In our own political life, who have been our most truly representative men? Webster, the rugged son of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, spoke as no other man spoke, "for the country and the whole country." It was the gaunt rustic President from Kentucky and Illinois who has become, in Lowell's noble phrase, "our first American."

Perhaps these figures outside the field of literature will help us to see the conditions for a representative national figure in literature. Those conditions can be met only by a powerful personality in harmony with its age. The personality must be great enough to take up into itself the great thoughts and feelings of its time, and transform them, personalize them, use them, and not be overwhelmed by them. Such a personality represents its age and country, not by the method of extension so much as by the method of intension, not by a wide superficial acquaintance with cities and with men, but by seeing deeply, and thinking deeply, and feeling deeply. It is by means of such power that Cooper and Hawthorne are American, as Fielding is English, Victor Hugo French, and Turgenieff Russian. If the future grants us sufficiently powerful individuals, thoroughly Americanized, we shall have representative American novelists.

A representative man of letters.

A further question forces itself upon us, and one by no means easy to answer. How is our fiction to be affected by the vast democratic movement which is

Democracy.

changing the face of society throughout the civilized world? There is at the present moment a reaction against liberalism in England and upon the continent, and a corresponding reaction against republicanism here. These reactions are more wide-spread than at any time for sixty years past, but they have been brought about by peculiar conditions, and no one supposes that they will ultimately block the wheels of advancing democracy. "The people will conquer in the end," as Byron prophesied as long ago as 1821. Now how will this triumph of the people affect literature? Are we to have an epoch of distinctively democratic art, and if we are, what sort of fiction can we imagine as flourishing in that epoch? Said J. A. Symonds, in his essay on "Democratic Art," —

"In past epochs the arts had a certain unconscious and spontaneous *rapport* with the nations which begat them, and with the central life-force of those nations at the moment of their flourishing. Whether that central energy was aristocratic, as in Hellas, or monarchic, as in France, or religious, as in mediæval Europe, or intellectual, as in Renaissance Italy, or national, as in Elizabethan England, or widely diffused like a fine gust of popular intelligence, as in Japan, signified comparatively little. Art expressed what the people

had of noblest and sincerest, and was appreciated by the people."

Can there be anything like this in the new era toward which we are hastening? Mr. Symonds himself was compelled to give up the question as at present unanswerable. It is undeniable that the aristocratic tradition still holds firm in almost all the arts. "Kings, princesses, and the symbols of chivalry," says the English critic Mr. Gosse, "are as essential to poetry as we now conceive it, as roses, stars, or nightingales," and he does not see what will be left if this romantic phraseology is done away with. "We shall certainly have left," retorted John Burroughs, "what we had before these aristocratic types and symbols came into vogue, namely, nature, life, man, God." But can poets and novelists find new artistic material in the people, the plain people who are so soon to hold the field? Walt Whitman declared, in a fine passage of his "Democratic Vistas," —

"Literature, strictly considered, has never recognized the People, and whatever may be said, does not to-day. I know nothing more rare even in this country than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appre-

ciation of the People — of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast artistic contrasts of lights and shades, with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes . . . in all the records of the world."

"The divine average."

The question is simply this: "How will all the phenomena of a great democratic society be able to touch the poet or novelist imaginatively?" And I think no one has felt the significance of this question more adequately than Whitman. He has tried to answer it in his not very clearly expressed phrase about recognizing "the divine average." What he means by the divine average is simply the presence of the divine in average human beings. If we grant the presence of that element in the "average sensual man," — an element which appeals to the sense of beauty and sublimity, which fires the imagination of the artist, — then democratic art is possible. Without it there can never be any democratic art, and we had better stick to kings and princesses, to Prisoners of Zenda and Gentlemen of France. But if one has read Dickens or George Eliot or Kipling, or any of the Ameri-

can novelists who have been faithful to the actual life of these United States, one knows that an art of fiction is even now in existence which does recognize the people, which reveals, however imperfectly, the diviner qualities in the life of the ordinary man.

Future types.

How is the art of fiction destined to be changed as this recognition is more and more widely made? Will the realistic or romantic type of fiction be best fitted to the needs of the coming democracy? Perhaps this question, too, cannot be answered, and yet one or two assertions may fairly be made. Democracy insists increasingly upon conformity to ordinary types. It is a pitiless leveler, whether up or down. It is fatal to eccentricities, to extravagant personal characteristics, in a word, to a large part of the field from which romantic fiction draws its power. Romantic types of character, as far as they have external marks of peculiarity, are probably destined to extinction. And our sense of wonder at outward things is steadily diminishing. Marvels have grown stale to us. We no longer gape over the telegraph, the telephone, the "wireless;" we shall gape at the flying machine for a few

days at longest. There will be one day no more unexplored corners of the world, no "road to Mandalay." We shall be forced to turn inward to discover the marvelous; "Cathay and all its wonders" must be found in us or nowhere. The effect of all this upon fiction will be unmistakable. If novels of the outward life, of conformity to known facts and types, are written, they will be realistic in method; the old romantic fiction machinery will become the veriest lumber. There will come again an age of realism in fiction, if a fiction is desired which keeps close to life. We may imagine that the readers of that age will smile at Victor Hugo and praise "Middlemarch." But the history of literature has taught us that men have always craved what I may call the fiction of compensation, the fiction that yields them what life cannot yield them. And as the inner world will then be the marvelous world, I imagine the fiction of compensation will take the form, not of adventures in South Seas and Dark Continents, but of the psychological romance, pure and simple. Readers will then smile at "Treasure Island" and praise "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

If all this appears, as perhaps it well may, too fanciful a picture, let us turn to the kind of subjects with which American novelists of the immediate future seem likely to occupy themselves. That there will be very shortly — if indeed there is not already — a reaction against over-production of Colonial, Revolutionary, and other types of American historical fiction, cannot be doubted. But this is chiefly because the supply has temporarily outrun the demand. The story of our own ancestors and their struggles upon American soil will never lose its essential fascination when depicted, not by a horde of imitative weaklings, but by masters of the fictive art. The marvelous epic of the settlement of the western half of the continent still waits an adequate reciter. We have had already a legion of Civil War stories, and yet we have not begun to see the wealth of material which that epoch holds for the true imaginative artist. The romance of labor, of traffic, of politics, in our strangely composite civilization, has been perceived by a few writers; but how much is still to be told!

Future themes.

For American social life is changing, taking account of itself before

A changing world.

our eyes, readjusting itself, and a thousand subtle, delightful, forceful themes are thus laid open to the novelist. He will follow in the wake of all these social movements of the twentieth century as the sea-birds follow the steamer, sure of finding the fit morsel soon or late. But that simile is inapt; the novelist is not like a creature watching the course of a mechanism; he is a creature enraptured with something that is itself alive, changing from hour to hour, unfolding, perfecting itself from generation to generation. We talk of human nature being ever the same; but nothing is falser to the facts of life and the process of the world's growth. Brute nature does remain the same. The ape and tiger of this hour are, so far as we know, exactly the same ape and tiger that our ancestors fought in the stone age. But the ape and tiger in us dies, though slowly; the brute passions are not destined forever to sway the balance in our lives. The human spirit changes, widens, grows richer and more beautiful with the infinite years of man's history upon this planet. And over against this wonderful process of development stands the novelist, himself a part of it all, and yet

one of its interpreters. If, watching that changing human spectacle, he finds no stories to tell, discovers no charm or beauty or solemnity, it is not because these things are not there, but because his eyes are holden.

Technique and imagination.

We need have no fear that the future American novelist will fail in power of expression. The technical finish of his work is assured by the standard that has been already reached. Decade by decade one can mark the steady development of the American novelist in all that pertains to mere craftsmanship. But the value of his work will not turn primarily upon its technical excellence on the side of form. Cleverness of hand he will certainly possess; but as I have said more than once already, cleverness of hand is not enough. If his work is to have any significant place in the literature of the world, he must learn to see and feel and think, and what he sees and feels and thinks will depend solely upon what he is himself. The "great American novel" will probably never be written by a man who suspects that he is doing anything of the sort. It is quite likely to come, as other greater things than novels come,

"without observation." You and I — Gentle Reader with whom I am parting company — may never see it, but ultimately nothing is so certain as the triumph of the things of the spirit over the gross material forces of American civilization. Summer itself is not so sure in its coming as the imagination in its own time.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

The first chapter of this book gives an outline of the method of studying fiction which has been followed throughout the volume. Teachers and students who may desire to do further work for themselves along the lines here suggested, or in other fields of investigation, are advised to give that first chapter a second reading, in the light thrown upon it by the book as a whole. It will help them to remember the specific purpose of this volume, and to see the relation between its method and that of other works to which the attention of the student should now be called. Some of my readers will be solitary students, free to follow any path they like into the pleasant fields of the theory and practice of story-writing. Others will be members of reading circles and clubs, where there is a definite although perhaps not very strenuous line of study mapped out in advance. Still others will, I hope, belong to school and college classes, bent upon serious endeavor to learn as much as possible about an art which has established its significance and value as an interpreter of modern life. In the bibliographies and other aids and suggestions for study which I shall now give, I have endeavored to keep in mind these

varying requirements of my readers. Some of the work outlined is extremely elementary. But I have also indicated some tasks which will need the full powers of the student. The arrangement of this supplementary work is such, however, that teachers will find no difficulty, I trust, in selecting from it such courses of reading and topical exercises as shall best suit the specific needs of their classes. I cannot urge too strongly the advisability of a detailed analytic study of some one representative novel, and, if possible, an acquaintance with the entire production of one of the greater novelists, before attempting more than a bird's-eye view of any national fiction as a whole. The average college student, in particular, needs training in the analysis of a single work, and in steady reflection upon the problems presented by it, far more than he needs a greater familiarity with the novelists of his own day. Most of us will remain readers of fiction all our lives long, but the chosen time for the serious study of fiction is in those golden years when we first perceive the treasures of thought and imagination, the breathing images of passionate human life, revealed to us by the novelists.

I

BIBLIOGRAPHY

a. Introductory: Æsthetics. Since the method followed in our study is primarily that of æsthetic criticism, the student of the art of fiction should, if possible, acquaint himself in some degree with the theory of the Fine Arts and their place in human life. For a

general survey of the field of Æsthetics, see the articles "Æsthetics," by James Sully, and "Fine Arts," by Sidney Colvin, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Baldwin Brown's *The Fine Arts* (University Extension Manuals, Scribners) is a useful handbook. Bosanquet's voluminous *History of Æsthetic* (Macmillan) is extremely valuable to the advanced student. Most of the standard treatises upon Æsthetics are indicated in the card catalogue of any good library; for an extended bibliography, consult Gayley and Scott, *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism* (Ginn & Co., 1899), Knight's *Philosophy of the Beautiful* (University Extension Manuals), and the Appendix to Bosanquet.

b. Introductory: Poetics. After this preliminary survey of the field of Æsthetics, the student is recommended to acquaint himself with some of the many helpful discussions of poetic theory. How closely the field of Poetics is allied to that of Prose Fiction we have already seen in the second and third chapters. The most famous of all treatises on Poetics is that of Aristotle. There are many good translations; the admirable one by Professor S. H. Butcher (Macmillan, 2d ed., 1898) is enriched by interpretative essays dealing with the disputable passages. A general bibliography for Poetics, with brief comment upon the important treatises, will be found in Gayley and Scott. The article on "Poetry" by Theodore Watts in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is noteworthy. Gummere's *Poetics* (Ginn & Co.) is an excellent brief handbook; see also his *Beginnings of Poetry* (Macmillan, 1901) and W. J. Courthope's *Life in Poetry — Law in Taste* (Macmillan, 1901). Volumes like Stedman's *Nature*

and Elements of Poetry (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) and C. C. Everett's *Poetry, Comedy, and Duty* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) are stimulating. But teachers who are provided with Gayley and Scott can easily make such reference lists as will be adapted to the needs and capacity of their pupils.

That portion of the territory of Poetics which is occupied with the Theory of the Drama is especially important for the student of fiction. Useful books are Freytag's *Technique of the Drama* (Eng. trans., S. C. Griggs & Co.), Elizabeth Woodbridge's *The Drama; its Law and Technique* (Allyn & Bacon), Alfred Hennequin's *Art of Play Writing* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), Price's *Technique of the Drama* (Brentano), Moulton's *Ancient Classical Drama* and *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (Macmillan).

c. Prose Fiction : Historical. Two admirable sketches of the history of English prose fiction are Walter Raleigh's *The English Novel* (Scribners, 1894) and Wilbur L. Cross's *The Development of the English Novel* (Macmillan, 1899). Dunlop's *History of Prose Fiction* (2 vols., revised edition by Wilson, Bohn, 1896) is a standard work of reference. Professor David Masson's *British Novelists and their Styles* (Boston, 1859) is still a fresh and suggestive volume. W. E. Simonds's *Introduction to English Fiction* (D. C. Heath, 1894) is a useful handbook for a preliminary survey. Consult also Bayard Tuckerman's *History of English Prose Fiction* (Putnam, 1882), F. M. Warren's *History of the Novel Previous to the Seventeenth Century* (Holt, 1895), Jusserand's *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare* (London, 1890), the Bibliographical Notes in

the Appendix to Cross, and the Bibliography prefaced to the first volume of Wilson's edition of Dunlop.

d. Prose Fiction: Philosophical and Critical. Suggestive discussions of general tendencies in modern fiction are found in F. H. Stoddard's *The Evolution of the English Novel* (Macmillan, 1899), Sidney Lanier's *The English Novel* (Scribners, revised edition, 1897), D. G. Thompson's *Philosophy of Fiction in Literature* (Longmans, 1890), Zola's *Le Roman Expérimental* (Eng. trans., Cassell, N. Y.), Brunetière's *Le Roman Naturaliste* (Paris), Spielhagen's *Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik des Romans* (Berlin), C. T. Winchester's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (Macmillan), Howells's *Criticism and Fiction* (Harpers), F. Marion Crawford's *The Novel: What It Is* (Macmillan), Sir Walter Besant's lecture on "The Art of Fiction" (Cupples, Upham & Co., Boston, 1885), Henry James's essay in rejoinder on "The Art of Fiction" in *Partial Portraits* (Macmillan), R. L. Stevenson's "A Humble Remonstrance" addressed to Mr. James (reprinted in *Memories and Portraits*), Brander Matthews's *The Historical Novel and other Essays* and *Aspects of Fiction* (Scribners), Paul Bourget's "Réflexions sur l'Art du Roman" in *Études et Portraits.* For younger students, Miss Charity Dye's *The Story-Teller's Art* (Ginn, 1898) is a useful book; and for such pupils May Estelle Cook's *Methods of Teaching Novels* (Scott, Foresman & Co.) and Alfred M. Hitchcock's *Journeys in Fiction* (Allyn & Bacon) also afford profitable hints.

e. Prose Fiction: Special Topics. Articles upon the various aspects of fiction have been frequent in periodical literature, especially since 1880. For these, consult

Poole's *Index to Periodical Literature.* W. M. Griswold's *Descriptive Lists of American and Foreign Novels* (Cambridge, Mass.) is useful, as are also the lists of selected fiction issued by the public libraries of Boston, Providence, and other cities. Some of the best comment upon novels and novelists is to be found in reviews and critical articles in periodicals; if Poole's *Index* is not at hand, the index to the periodical itself will often put the student upon the track of helpful material. Biographies of the great novelists, and their Notebooks and Letters, are full of suggestive comment upon their art.

The footnotes to the various chapters of the present work give occasional references to books bearing particularly upon the subject of each chapter; but as I have wished to keep the text as free as possible from notes, I will add here a few suggestions for special reading in connection with some of the main topics of the book.

In studying chapter iii. for instance, it will be well to take as supplementary reading some of the books already mentioned under *b*, and especially Gummere's *Poetics* and Watts's article. For chapter iii., note especially Freytag, Woodbridge, and Hennequin.

For chapter iv., note Edward Dowden's *Studies in Literature*, J. Wedgwood on "The Ethics of Literature" in *Contemporary Review*, January, 1897, and W. J. Stillman on "The Revival of Art" in the *Atlantic*, vol. lxx.

In connection with chapters v., vi., and vii., the most profitable work is a first-hand study of the practice of various novelists, as indicated below under II. *Topics for Study.*

For chapter viii., see Ruskin's "Art and Morals" in *Lectures on Art*, D. G. Thompson, chapter xiii., Lanier, chapter xii., Stoddard, chapter v., John La Farge's *Considerations on Painting*, Lecture II. (Macmillan), Charles F. Johnson's *Elements of Literary Criticism*, chapter iv. (Harpers).

In connection with the discussion of Realism in chapter ix., see Howells's *Criticism and Fiction*, the chapter on Realism in W. C. Brownell's *French Art* (Scribners), Valdés's Preface to *Sister St. Sulpice* (Crowell), and Cross, chapters v. and vi.

Romanticism (chapter x.) is discussed in many recent volumes, such as the books of Beers and Phelps referred to on page 262. See also Pater's essay in the Postscript of *Appreciations*, F. H. Hedge's article in the *Atlantic*, vol. lvii., T. S. Omond's *The Triumph of Romance* (Scribners), W. P. Ker's *Epic and Romance* (Macmillan), and consult the Bibliography furnished by Professor Beers.

For chapter xi., see the references in the text to Minto, Clark, Gardner, Brewster, and Baldwin, and the critical essays of James, Stevenson, Brunetière, Bourget, and other acute contemporary students of literary form.

For chapter xii., compare Poe's criticism of Hawthorne in *Graham's Magazine*, 1842 (in vol. vii. of the Stedman-Woodberry edition; Stone & Kimball), Brander Matthews's *The Philosophy of the Short-Story* (Longmans, 1901), C. R. Barrett's *Short Story Writing* (Baker and Taylor), Sherwin Cody's *The World's Greatest Short Stories* (McClurg, 1902), G. S. Nettleton's *Specimens of the Short Story* (Holt), W. M. Hart's *Hawthorne and the Short*

Story (Berkeley, Cal., 1900), and H. S. Canby's "The Short Story" (*Yale Studies in English;* Holt, 1902).

For chapter xiii., see Walt Whitman's "Democratic Vistas," Lowell's address on "Democracy," J. A. Symonds's "Democratic Literature" in *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*, W. H. Crawshaw's *Literary Interpretation of Life*, chapters v.–vii. (Macmillan), C. F. Richardson's *American Literature* vol. ii. (Putnam, 1889), W. C. Bronson's *Short History of American Literature* (Heath, 1901), Barrett Wendell's *History of Literature in America* (Scribners, 1901), and A. G. Newcomer's *American Literature* (Scott, Foresman & Co., 1901).

f. Representative English Novels. To students desiring to understand the historical development of English fiction in its main outlines, the following list of typical productions is suggested: Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590), Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–84), Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704), Defoe's *Captain Singleton* (1720), Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Fielding's *Amelia* (1751), Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1812), Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50), Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72), Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883).

g. Representative American Novels. The following stories are fairly representative of the tendencies of American fiction: Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), Irving's *Sketch Book* (1819), Cooper's *Last of*

the Mohicans (1826), Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1839), Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* (1850), Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Bret Harte's *Luck of Roaring Camp* (1870), Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871), Clemens's [Mark Twain] *Tom Sawyer* (1876), Henry James's *The American* (1877), Howells's *Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Cable's *Grandissimes* (1880), Miss Wilkins's *Humble Romance* (1887), Weir Mitchell's *Hugh Wynne* (1897), Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902).

II

TOPICS FOR STUDY

It cannot be emphasized too often that the aim of this *Study of Prose Fiction* is to help students to use their own eyes and minds. Topics for independent study may be assigned in connection with almost all the chapters in the book, but v., vi., and vii. are particularly well adapted for this kind of work. For instance, the student may be asked to write a brief paper, as the result of independent study in any author, of one or more of the following topics: —

1. *Character-Studies.* (See chapter v.)

A character embodying but one quality or passion. A complex character with one trait in predominance. A complex character consisting of evenly balanced opposing forces. A character involved in a conscious moral struggle, successful or otherwise; in an unconscious moral struggle. Deterioration, with or without a struggle. A character developing under prosperity;

adversity; old age; influence of other personalities; of religion, art, philosophy. A character illustrating professional, class, or national traits. A character fulfilling the requirements of its rôle as villain, lover, heroine, etc. A "plot-ridden" character. Character-contrasts: in the family; among friends; in wider relations. Character-grouping. as regards the unifying principle, subordination of parts, place in the book as a whole.

2. *Studies in Plot.* (See chapter vi.)

An incident as revealing character. A situation as determining character. A climax in its relation to the theme. A catastrophe as poetic justice; as illustrative of the individual philosophy of the writer; as unsatisfactory to the reader. Plot complication and resolution as dictated by character. Accident as a complicating force; a resolving force. Fate as a resolving force. Mystification in plot. Anticlimax in plot. Plot as determined by the characters. Sustaining of plot-interest. A perfect plot. A sub-plot as reflecting, depending upon, or artificially joined to the main plot. A plot as influenced by the setting.

3. *Studies in Setting.* (See chapter vii.)

A given novel as illustrating the time and place of its setting; for instance, the Egyptian, Oriental, Greek, Roman, or mediæval world. The setting of a novel whose scenes are laid in a part of America with which you are personally familiar; for instance, a Tennessee, Virginia, New York, New England, California story. A setting making artistic use of one of the great occupations of men: as politics, war, commerce, manufac-

turing, farming, mining, travel, student life, life of the unemployed poor, the unemployed rich. A setting furnished by institutions or ideas prevalent in society: as feudalism, democracy, socialism, patriotism, religion. The sea, the mountains, the city, the village, the country, as setting for a given story. A landscape setting which harmonizes with the characters; contrasts with the characters; affects the incidents; determines the situations; gives unity to the book.

III

ORIGINAL WORK IN CONSTRUCTION

This book is not designed, of course, to give training to "young writers" in practical craftsmanship. But it is often a stimulus to the intelligent and sympathetic reading of fiction to attempt for one's self some of the practical problems with which novelists are constantly called upon to deal. For class-room work, in particular, some such exercises as the following will be found interesting: —

1. Read the opening chapters of any novel until you feel sure that the main characters are all introduced; then block out a plot which shall accord with your view of the characters.

2. Read until the complication is well advanced; then block out the remainder of the plot.

3. Read until you are sure the catastrophe is imminent; then sketch in detail a catastrophe which shall harmonize with the foregoing plot.

4. Construct a diagram of a plot involving but two or three persons, indicating the lines of complication, the climax or turning point, and the dénoûment.

5. Construct a similar diagram, indicating the situations or steps by which the action advances to the climax, and thence to the catastrophe.

6. Describe a room or a house so that each detail shall serve to indicate the character of the occupant.

7. Write a conversation which indirectly reveals a character; describe an action which directly reveals a character.

8. Describe an important situation, sketching briefly the antecedent and subsequent plot-movement.

9. Write a closing chapter, indicating the steps by which it is reached.

10. Describe a group of characters suitable for a sub-plot, with the briefest indication of their connection with the main plot.

IV

PRACTICE IN ANALYSIS

In studying representative novels, whether in the class-room or by one's self, it is well to read with pencil in hand, and to endeavor to sum up, as clearly as possible, the outline of the story, as regards plot, characters, and design. A simple method of analysis is here given, as applied to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

Vanity Fair.

I. *Aim.* Where did Thackeray get his title? What light is thrown by the title, the author's preface, and the references to Vanity Fair throughout the novel, upon the aim and spirit of the book? In other words, what is Thackeray trying to do?

II. (a) *Characters.* Fiction exhibits characters in

action, by means of narration and description. Study the opening chapters of *Vanity Fair* with the aim of getting a clear conception of the characters there presented, before the complication of the story really begins.

(b) *Plot.* After doing this we must study the characters as they are thrown together, influenced by one another, and developed by means of the action. It will therefore be necessary, before examining the characters in complication with one another, to trace the action, or plot, of the novel. The plot of *Vanity Fair* may, for convenience, be summarized under seven divisions.

1. *Introduction.* (Chapters 1–11, inclusive.) The opening six chapters are concerned with Amelia, Rebecca, the Osbornes, the Sedleys, and Dobbin; the next five chapters describe the Crawleys.

2. *Development.* (12–26.) This division treats mainly of Miss Crawley, Rebecca's conquests, the Sedley failure, Dobbin's affection for Amelia, and George Osborne's disinheritance.

3. *The Waterloo Campaign.* (27–32.) Here is the first great crisis of the book. Its significance in the plot, aside from George Osborne's death, lies in its definite revelations of character, particularly of Joseph Sedley, Dobbin, and Rebecca.

4. *Struggles and Trials.* (33–46.) This division covers many years of time. Rebecca is successfully fighting her way up in the world, and Amelia is struggling vainly against poverty. Chapter 39 is important as affecting Rebecca's position. Note that chapter 37 prepares the way for division 5, just as chapter 43 is a preparation for division 6.

5. *Lord Steyne.* (47–55.) Here is the second and greatest crisis of the story. It contains the culmination of Rebecca's success, and the catastrophe. Chapter 50 is inserted here to show the lowest point of Amelia's fortunes.

6. *Our Friend the Major.* (56–61.) The re-introduction of two characters, and the deaths of two others, mark the turning point in Amelia's struggles, just as division 5 shows the turn in Rebecca's.

7. *Dénoûment.* Note Rebecca's degradation, her temporary influence over Amelia, Dobbin's departure, recall, and marriage, the end of Joseph Sedley, and Rebecca's final position in the world.

(c) *Setting.* Having mastered the plot, in its main and subordinate features, it will be well to review definitely the circumstances of time and place in which the action is laid; as for instance, London life in the period 1814–30, Queen's Crawley under Sir Pitt, Brussels in 1815, the Rawdon Crawley establishment in Curzon Street, Gaunt House, or the town of Pumpernickel. Be able to reproduce this historical and local setting as far as possible.

(d) Review each character, first by itself, then in contrast with the other characters with which it is most closely grouped, and determine lastly what is the function of each character in the plot as a whole. Distinguish carefully between the characters that are unmodified by the action of the story, as Sir Pitt or Mrs. O'Dowd, and those whose development is affected by the action, as Rawdon Crawley or Rebecca.

III. *Style.* If we understand what Thackeray aimed to do in writing *Vanity Fair*, and what he has actually done, we are ready to criticise his manner of doing

it, that is, his style. Judging from *Vanity Fair* alone, what inferences can you draw as to Thackeray's (a) creation of character, (b) invention of plot, and (c) power of narration and description; in other words, his gifts as a story-teller?

V

REVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions to be asked of the student, in reviewing the works of fiction selected for his study, will naturally vary widely. The queries made by one teacher will not suit another at every point. But I have thought it worth while to give here a few examples of review questions, based upon such different material as Scott's *Ivanhoe*, some selected short stories of Poe and Hawthorne, and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. They may serve as hints for better questions, if nothing more.

a. Ivanhoe.[1]

I. The function of the opening chapter of a novel is ordinarily to give a picture of the time or place in which the story is to move, or to introduce some of the minor — occasionally the leading — characters, or to strike the keynote of the dramatic action. If it is prevailingly narrative, rather than descriptive, it usually deals with an event from which the subsequent events of the book distinctly take their origin, or an event or scene which must be explained before the reader can advance into the story, or one to the explanation of which the entire book is to be devoted. Which of

[1] Reprinted by permission from the annotated edition of *Ivanhoe*, edited by Bliss Perry. Longmans, Green & Co., 1897

these various purposes does the first chapter of *Ivanhoe* seem to you to fulfill? Compare it, for effectiveness, with the opening chapter of Scott's earliest novels, such as *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering;* with some of his later novels, such as *Kenilworth* and *Quentin Durward.* Study this first conversation of the jester and the swineherd as an example of character-contrast.

II. What do you think of Scott's habit of describing in minute detail the personal appearance of his characters, before he has made them reveal their nature by speech or action? Do you recall any other novels in which Scott has depicted a worldly minded ecclesiastic? Compare the Templar with Marmion, in external traits and character, as far as this chapter reveals the Templar to us. Are the references to Cedric and Rowena, designed of course to prepare us for the following chapter, skillfully introduced?

III. Compare Cedric with other fiery old people in Scott's novels, as Sir Geoffrey in *Peveril of the Peak,* Baron Bradwardine in *Waverley,* Lady Bellenden in *Old Mortality,* and Sir Henry Lee in *Woodstock.* Notice how his talk is designed to heighten the reader's interest in the coming chapter.

IV. Note the opportunity of which Scott here avails himself to describe again the personal appearance of two of his leading characters. Does the delay in Rowena's entrance add to its effectiveness? Can you give a clear account, from memory, of her features and dress? What is gained by having the entrance of a stranger announced at the very end of the chapter?

V. For prototypes of Isaac of York, read Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe's *Jew of*

Malta. Can you find other strongly drawn Jewish figures in the drama or in fiction? Note that the quarrel between the Templar and the Palmer furnishes a sort of "inciting moment;" that is, an action which involves and leads to the subsequent plot-movement. Does Rowena's loyalty to the reputation of Ivanhoe indicate anything as to the relation between these two characters? What interest is added to the story by the fact that the Palmer appears obviously in disguise? What other instances of disguise can you recall in Scott's poems and novels?

VI. Note how the close of this chapter, as that of the preceding one, is designed to stimulate the reader's interest in the coming tournament. Review the first six chapters, all of which centre in Rotherwood, and see if you have the characters and the plot (as thus far outlined) clearly in mind. Notice carefully whether the main characters develop as the story progresses, or are left stationary as regards mental and moral growth, as is usual with minor characters in fiction. In a romance of adventure, is there much gained by insisting upon this character-development?

VII. Can you draw a plan of the lists from memory of the description just given? Note the points of contrast between the figures of Rebecca and Rowena at their first presentation to the reader.

VIII. In connection with this chapter the description of the tournament in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* may be read with advantage. Notice the very skillful fashion in which Scott leads up to the entrance of the Disinherited Knight, and the artistic effect of "the solitary trumpet." By what various means does he secure the reader's sympathy for the unknown champion?

IX. What is the value, in this chapter, of the fiction-writer's privilege of explaining what is passing in the minds of his characters? Can you criticise the dialogue in any respects?

X. Note the successive stages by which the manly character of Gurth is revealed to the reader; also the effective race-contrast between him and Isaac. Is anything gained by the reference to the Knight's "perplexed ruminations" which it is not now "possible to communicate to the reader"? Can you point out any passages where Isaac's talk seems too rhetorical to be altogether natural?

XI. The forest scene delineated in chapter xi. furnishes a sort of comic interlude, midway in the eight chapters that centre around the tournament at Ashby. What are the devices by which Scott secures our respect for Gurth and also for the outlaws? What were the elements in Scott's nature, as far as you understand it, that would make the writing of a chapter like this a thoroughly congenial task to him?

XII. The foregoing chapter is one of the most famous in English fiction, and will repay the closest study. Note that the unlooked-for prowess of the Black Knight, and the discovery of the identity of the Disinherited Knight, furnish it with two distinct points of climax. In the first of these, what is gained by the unexpectedness of the incident? Can you recall similar feats of arms, as described by other novelists? If you find Scott superior as a describer of such things, in what points does his superiority seem to you to lie? Does the dropping of Ivanhoe's disguise suggest anything to you about the danger of over-using disguise as an element of interest in fiction? Does Scott alto-

gether escape the danger in *The Talisman*, *The Abbot*, and elsewhere?

XIII. This is another very famous chapter. The effect of climax, in Locksley's successive shots, is in its way as finely artistic as Scott's management of the tournament in chapter xii. Study it closely. Similar feats of archery are described in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545) and Maurice Thompson's *Witchery of Archery*. A mark like Locksley's, and an equal skill, is credited to various personages (Robin Hood, Clym of the Cleugh, William of Cloudesley) in old English ballads. For a discussion of these Robin Hood ballads, see Professor F. J. Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*, vol. v. Do you remember any other characters depicted by Scott who have, like Hubert, "one set speech for all occasions"? (See *Woodstock*, *Waverley*, etc.)

XIV. Note how this chapter furnishes concrete illustration of those differences between Saxon and Norman which it was Scott's purpose to emphasize wherever possible. Why does Cedric's toast to Richard increase the reader's sympathy for both of these characters?

XV. This is a good example of an intrigue chapter, as distinguished from one devoted to the exposition of character or to the depiction of a situation. Its purpose is to furnish a link between two stages of the narrative, and explain the events of the chapters immediately succeeding. What do you think of Waldemar's soliloquy, as compared with similar ones in *Richard III.*, *Othello*, etc., where the villain outlines his scheme? Is a soliloquy, as such, better suited to the drama than to the novel?

XVI. This is another comic interlude, in Scott's richest vein, and is the first of five forest chapters which separate the Rotherwood and Ashby groups of chapters from the eleven chapters that deal with the siege of Torquilstone. For the rôle played by Friar Tuck in the Robin Hood ballads, see the previous references to them. Scott's fondness for exhibiting the human — not to say worldly — side of his clerical figures is noticeable. Can you recall any instances of it?

XVII. It is only an artificial division, of course, which separates this chapter from the preceding one. From your knowledge of Scott's poetry, do you consider the songs in this chapter a fair representation of his skill in that field?

XVIII. Does the language put into Gurth's mouth seem to you invariably in keeping with the character? Notice the relatively slight interest, whether of plot or characterization, that this chapter affords, and then see how the interest is heightened, from point to point, during the next two chapters.

XIX. Note the ease and precision of the character-drawing here, and the rapidity of the forward movement of the story.

XX. The reader should observe how this chapter, like the two preceding ones, directs the attention forward, rather than concentrates it upon the events immediately before the mind. See also the suggestions at the close of the last chapter.

XXI. This is the first of the eleven consecutive chapters that deal with the Castle of Torquilstone. Observe how careful Scott is to explain the technical words he uses in describing it. Have you a sufficiently distinct picture of the castle in your mind to enable

you to draw a rough sketch of its main features? Try to do so. Compare Torquilstone with similar castles in Scott's other novels (*The Betrothed*, *Old Mortality*, *Quentin Durward*, etc.). Mark the sharp character-contrast between Cedric and Athelstane. Do you think the author's humorous insistence upon the latter's unfailing gluttony is overdone? What device, frequent in romantic fiction, is used just at the close of the chapter to carry forward the reader's curiosity?

XXII. Is Scott's portrayal of Front-de-Bœuf as a "heavy villain" open to criticism at any point? For the mingling of paternal affection and avarice in Isaac's nature, compare Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice.*

XXIII. The scene between Rowena and De Bracy is finely conceived, and affords an artistic contrast to the still more admirable scene between Rebecca and the Templar in the succeeding chapter. What qualities possessed by Rowena fit her to be the heroine of a romantic tale? Has she shown any defects, as a typical heroine, or as a woman, up to this point? Are the last four paragraphs — the inserted ones — in keeping with the general tone of the story? Do you think the writer of a historical novel ought to bring forward actual proofs of the manners and facts which he uses in his narrative?

XXIV. Notice the similarity in the construction of the last four chapters. In each a scene involving two persons (Cedric and Athelstane, Isaac and Front-de-Bœuf, Rowena and De Bracy, Rebecca and the Templar) is interrupted by the "blowing of the horn" outside the castle. Do you think that this scheme of following the fortunes of the different groups up to an

incident that affects them all could be bettered? Why is the scene between Rebecca and the Templar the climax of the four? By what means is the contrast in character between Rebecca and Rowena most effectively shown? In the Templar's story of his own life, do you find any traces of the conventional Byronic hero?

XXV. What details in this chapter seem to you most characteristic of Scott? What are some of the differences between conversation in novels and conversation in actual life?

XXVI. In this chapter, as in the preceding one, observe what is gained by shifting the emphasis so that it falls, for a while, upon the minor characters. Is Scott altogether consistent in the motives he assigns for Wamba's conduct? What means are used to heighten our respect for the moral qualities of Wamba, Cedric, and Athelstane, in turn? Notice how the disguises furnish a new set of interests and serve as an interlude between the more dramatic portions of the action.

XXVII. May this chapter fairly be criticised for its lack of unity? Is the delineation of Ulrica, and the story she tells, unnatural at any points? Compare her manner of talk with that of Mrs. Macgregor in *Rob Roy* and of Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering*. What speech of De Bracy, in this chapter, is most characteristic of him? In the discussion about the ransoms, study carefully the motives of each speaker. Do you think the haste and confusion of the latter part of the chapter enhance the effect of excitement and expectation?

XXVIII. Do you consider the opening sentence of this chapter a fortunate one? Can you recall instances, in the chapter, of purely conventional epithets, like Re-

becca's "slender" fingers and "ruby" lips? Of sentences arranged in reverse order to give an archaic effect? Of sentences recalling the rhythm of the Scriptures, or that of blank verse? Note that De Bracy's "middle course between good and evil" is one that Scott frequently forces upon his heroes. An interesting parallel to Rebecca's conversation about Jews and Christians will be found in Lessing's *Nathan der Weise.*

XXIX. This chapter is one of the most famous in the whole range of English fiction, and is an admirable example of Scott's power of vigorous, impassioned description. The device of making the observer of the action relate it to another, who is unable to witness it, is at least as old as the story of Bluebeard. It has been skillfully employed in Rossetti's *Sister Helen*, Tennyson's *Harold* (act v.), and elsewhere.

XXX. In this death scene, and in similar passages elsewhere in Scott's novels, do you think the author lays himself open to the charge of confounding tragedy with melodrama?

XXXI. This admirable chapter, the final one of the eleven devoted to the siege of Torquilstone, contains obviously one of the main climaxes of the book. It will be well for the reader to review the characters of the story and the general plot-movement up to this point, with the aim of seeing exactly what has been accomplished and what still remains to be done by the author in satisfying the expectations that have been raised. The account of the capture of the castle will be most enjoyed by those readers who are able to form an exact picture of the building and its outworks. Compare the features of this siege with similar ones described in *Old Mortality*, *Quentin Durward*, *Woodstock*, *Peveril of the Peak*,

and elsewhere. Is the manner of De Bracy's submission an adequate indication of the real personality of the Black Knight? Observe how Scott secures our sympathy for all of the personages in this chapter by assigning to each of them some brave or chivalrous action.

XXXII. The few sentences of landscape depiction, at the beginning of the chapter, may suggest a comparison between Scott's novels and his poems as regards the extent to which he avails himself, in the two arts, of landscape effects. Distinguish carefully chapters like the preceding, designed to give a picture of characters in a certain mood, from chapters containing situations or events that directly advance the plot. The freedom with which Scott makes his personages jest upon sacred subjects was sharply criticised by one reviewer at the time of *Ivanhoe's* first appearance. Do you think this chapter, and the following one, are really at fault in this respect?

XXXIII. In this continuation of the comic interlude, begun in the preceding chapter, note the ease and skill with which national and professional types of character are contrasted with each other. The humorous situation involved in making Isaac and the Prior fix each other's ransom is thoroughly characteristic of Scott. Mark his power of shifting sympathy from one side to the other, and of changing the tone of description toward the end of the chapter, as more serious interests again assert their claims upon the reader.

XXXIV. In the delineation of well known historical figures, like Richard and John, how far do you think the novelist is forced to adopt the popular conception of the figure? Is Scott's depiction of the natural treachery

of John in accordance with all we know of that prince? Compare Shakespeare's *King John*. In an historical novel, is it better that some great historical personage should be the leading figure, or may that place be better filled by a fictitious character? Study Scott's varying methods in *The Abbot*, *The Talisman*, *Kenilworth*, *Quentin Durward*, *Woodstock*, and elsewhere.

XXXV. This is the first of a group of chapters, the scene of which is laid at Templestowe. What are some of the obvious advantages of a change of scene in a story of romantic adventure? Observe how the reader's attention, in this closing period of the story, is more and more directed toward Rebecca. In the delineation of the Grand Master, notice how natural it is for Scott to make his ecclesiastics either worldlings or fanatics. The same thing is to be observed in *Peveril of the Peak*, *Woodstock*, *Old Mortality*, and elsewhere.

XXXVI. In this finely dramatic situation, note the precision of the character-drawing. The "scrap of paper" mentioned in the closing paragraph is one of the link-devices used to hold this group of chapters together. Do you find Scott superior or inferior to other novelists of high rank in the art of calculating his effects and giving the reader hints of them a long time in advance? Does what you know of Scott's method of composition throw any light upon this question?

XXXVII. It was possibly Scott's own legal training that made him delight in introducing trials into his works of fiction. Particularly interesting analogies to the one described in this chapter may be found in the account of the "Vehmegericht" in *Anne of Geierstein* and in canto ii. of *Marmion*. Rebecca's demand for a champion gives the artistic "motive" for the remain-

ing chapters of the story. Do you think any irony is intended in her last speech about England, "the hospitable, the generous, the free"?

XXXVIII. Study the effective contrast between the mental processes of the cultivated Orientals and the unlettered English messenger.

XXXIX. Note what is called "tragic elevation" in the dialogue, i. e. a language removed, sublimated, from the speech of daily life. Distinguish between scenes that test the moral fibre of a person when he is quite unconscious of any struggle (see almost every chapter of Scott) and scenes like the foregoing, embodying a conscious moral or spiritual struggle, which are comparatively rare in Scott. Contrast him, in this regard, with George Eliot and Hawthorne.

XL. Note, as before, how the forest scene gives relief from the high tension of the previous chapter. The variety and unforced humor and dramatic situations in this chapter can scarcely be praised too highly. Review the successive hints that have been given as to the real personality of the Black Knight and Locksley. Do they enhance the reader's pleasure in the scene when the disguises are finally thrown off? Observe the skill with which the Robin Hood legends and the actual traits of Richard I. have here been mingled.

XLI. In Scott's analysis of Richard's nature, and especially in the words "the brilliant but useless character of a knight of romance," observe how his shrewd Scotch judgment offsets his sentiment. It is in this capacity for alternate sympathy with both sides of a question that much of his power as a story-teller lies. See Julia Wedgwood's "Ethics and Literature" in the *Contemporary Review*, January, 1897.

XLII. Scott's note on the raising of Athelstane is the best possible comment upon his happy-go-lucky methods in arranging his plot. He said himself that he always "pushed for the pleasantest road towards the end of a story." As a whole, do you think he insists too much upon the gluttonous side of Athelstane's nature for even the best comic effect?

XLIII. For a parallel to the by-play among the minor characters, at the outset of the chapter, recall the scene between Isaac and Wamba at the beginning of the tournament (chapter vii.). The Templar's last proposition to Rebecca provides the "moment of final suspense" which often occurs in fiction and the drama. In the Templar's death, notice how Scott gives a natural cause for an event which is designed to impress us, and does impress us, as an act of divine justice. Observe how simply, and yet how seriously and adequately, Scott deals with this great theme of the judgment of God.

XLIV. The withdrawal of the Templars furnishes one of the most purely picturesque incidents in the book. Do you think the final disposition of the characters exhibits poetic justice? Reflect carefully upon the last paragraph of Scott's Introduction, which bears upon this question. It is one of the noblest passages in all of Scott's works, and it was written at a time when he had had full experience of both good and evil fortune.

b. Hawthorne.

[Review questions based upon the eight tales reprinted in the Little Masterpieces Series, Doubleday & Page, N. Y.]

Dr. Heidegger's Experiment. How would you characterize Hawthorne's humor, as here exhibited?

Compare this tale with any other writings of Hawthorne in which the same theme appears.

Do Dr. Heidegger's friends impress you as individuals or as types? Is the final paragraph effective?

The Birthmark. Explain how the opening paragraph establishes the theme of the story.

Do you find evidence here of a morbid imagination? Is there anything fantastic or exaggerated in the development of the plot or the characters?

What do you think of Aylmer as a representative of the scientific spirit?

What do you conceive to be the "moral" of the story?

Ethan Brand. This should be compared carefully with those portions of the *American Note-Books* that describe Hawthorne's sojourn in the Berkshire Hills in 1838.

Can you name any modern stories or poems in which the same conception of the Unpardonable Sin is found?

What are the most effective details in the setting of the story?

What are the most effective contrasts either in character or between scenery and character?

In what sense is *Ethan Brand* a fragment? Suggest a plan for expanding it into a more complete whole.

Wakefield. What are the most skillful touches in the delineation of Mr. Wakefield's character?

Comment upon the union of fancy and imagination in this tale.

Do you detect any irony in it? What are its chief points of suggestion to you?

Drowne's Wooden Image. Comment upon the purely poetical elements of the theme.

Can you describe in detail the carven figure-head?

Is the clearing up of the mystery at the close altogether satisfactory to the reader?

What part of the tale would give a story-teller the greatest difficulty in your opinion?

The Ambitious Guest. Point out the sentences, here and there in the story, that most plainly foreshadow the catastrophe.

By what means has the author secured unity of effect?

Comment upon this tale as an example of "local color" in fiction.

What seems to you its most admirable feature either in idea or workmanship?

The Great Stone Face. Does Hawthorne ever seem to you to err on the side of too great simplicity, as when we say that an idea is "childish" rather than "child-like"?

What do you consider the most memorable sentence in the story?

Is its ethical teaching too sharply forced upon the reader?

The Gray Champion. What points of excellence in narrative does this tale exhibit?

How can the writer of such a sketch show imaginative power while keeping close to historical fact?

Is anything gained by hinting, rather than actually declaring, that the Gray Champion was one of the Regicides?

General Questions.

Which of these stories do you like or admire most, and why?

What are the most obvious characteristics of Hawthorne's style, as here exemplified?

Taking these tales as fairly representative, do you find Hawthorne's imagination too sombre?

Do you notice anything "bloodless" or "unsympathetic" or "dilettanteish" in his personality as a writer?

If you find these stories excelling most contemporary work in the same field, where does Hawthorne's superiority seem to lie?

c. Poe.

[Review questions based upon the seven tales reprinted in the Little Masterpieces Series. Doubleday & Page, N. Y.]

Fall of the House of Usher. How does the opening sentence strike the key of the story?

As the story advances, what details are most successful in securing a cumulative effect?

In what passages are the moods and forms of nature used to harmonize with human emotions?

Do you detect any intrusion of purely rhetorical devices?

Ligeia. Trace the correspondence in physical features between the Lady Ligeia and Robert Usher and the portraits of Poe himself.

Find instances of description by suggestion merely.

Do the mythological allusions add anything to the effect?

Distinguish between the sensational and the emotional impressions produced by the closing paragraphs of the story.

Do you find ground for Poe's opinion that this was the finest of all his tales?

The Cask of Amontillado. Point out the rhetorical means by which brevity and rapidity of movement are here secured. What is gained by the apparent reticence of the narrator?

How do you think his tone of cold hatred for Montresor is best exhibited?

The Assignation. Do you find any trace here of the Byronic hero?

How would you characterize Poe's taste as shown by the interior decoration of his houses? Point out instances of Poe's fondness for allusions to far-away and mysterious places and objects.

Do you find any use of symbolism as distinguished from sensuous imagery?

What is gained by keeping the secret of the plot until the final sentence?

MS. found in a Bottle. Why is the opening page characteristic of Poe?

What are the most effective details in the portrayal of the storm?

Study the sequence of the details that are designed to indicate the antiquity of the doomed ship.

What elements of the story seem to you most genuinely romantic?

The Black Cat. What are the dangers of an opening paragraph like the one here?

What faults of taste do you discover? Is too much stress laid upon physical rather than spiritual horrors?

In what respects, if any, do you find this tale superior to the ordinary "penny dreadful" upon a similar theme?

The Gold-Bug. What traces of Defoe's influence are manifest here?

What are the elements that make this story mor cheerful than the others in the volume?

In the main plan of the story, what do you think is gained by first showing the success of Legrand's

scheme, and then analyzing and explaining the method he followed?

General Questions.

Which of these tales do you admire most, and why?

Do you see evidence of Poe's lack of power to portray objectively a variety of types and situations?

Do you think there is justification for the remark that "Poe has a manner rather than a style"?

Do you find Poe deficient in humor, judging from these tales alone?

What do you think of his skill in fixing the tone or atmosphere of each tale?

How is Poe's gift of imagination most clearly shown?

Summarize briefly your own personal opinion of Poe's artistic weakness and strength.

d. Review questions upon George Eliot's Middlemarch.

How does the preface indicate the keynote of the book? Determine to what extent the words first spoken by each character are intended to be typical of the speaker. In what ways are the characters of Dorothea and Celia most effectively contrasted? How do Dorothea's strongest and weakest traits unite with each other to help forward the action of the story? Indicate the successive steps by which Dorothea's disillusion with regard to her husband was completed. Why do most of the attractive descriptions of Dorothea's personal appearance come after her marriage rather than before it? What are the commonplace traits in Lydgate? How far did he deserve his unpopularity in

Middlemarch? In the delineation of his professional ambitions and struggles, how much is due to the time in which the book is laid, and how much would always be true of a young doctor with similar aspirations? What are the forces that made him slacken his resolution? Why was his casting a ballot for Tike a crisis in his career? At what point after their marriage did Lydgate definitely surrender to the superior will power of Rosamond? Do you remember any other instances, in George Eliot's novels, of people crippling the lives of others by their egoism? Was Lydgate justified in taking money from Bulstrode? What were the causes of Mr. Casaubon's failure as a scholar? Does your discovery of the serious nature of his illness alter essentially your attitude toward him? What are the characteristic qualities of Mr. Brooke's conversation? Describe Will Ladislaw's personal appearance. Explain his liking for Rosamond's society. Describe Mr. Bulstrode's voice. What hints are given of his hypocrisy before we are actually told of it? Compare him with any other hypocrites in George Eliot's books. Was Mary Garth right in refusing old Featherstone's last request? Is the character of Featherstone overdone? Does Rosamond's alleged cleverness appear in her conversation? What trait in Rosamond is most irritating to the reader? What are the attractive features of Farebrother's love for Mary Garth? What are Farebrother's limitations, as George Eliot seem to have conceived them? What is the process by which Fred Vincy attains to strength of character? Are there any characters in the book whose talk reminds you of people in Dickens? Instance the stationary, as compared with the developing characters.

What group of characters do you consider most successful?

Determine to what extent the first action of each character is intended to be typical of the person. Give examples of very slight incidents which are nevertheless significant "moments" in the story. What situations do you think the strongest? Why? Can you recall any situations that are artistically ineffective? Do you think that the Dorothea-Casaubon plot is on the whole skillfully linked with the Lydgate-Rosamond plot? In what ways do any of the sub-plots affect the main plot? Is there justification for the author's own fear that in *Middlemarch* she had too much matter — too many "momenti"? Do the plot-requirements of the story force any of the personages into actions that seem out of character? Do you think George Eliot successful in handling the Raffles episode? In general, do you think her gifts and training were such as to fit her for managing mystery as an element in plot? Is she apparently interested in action for its own sake? Does the plot of *Middlemarch*, in any of its details or as a whole, seem to you to fail either in intrinsic power or in its ability to hold the reader's attention?

In the setting of *Middlemarch*, what are the traces of the impressions made by the author's own early life? Why is there so little landscape depiction, when compared with some of her other books? Give instances, however, of landscape in harmony with the mood of a character; in contrast with the mood. What impression do you receive of George Eliot's ideas about the influence of village life upon character? Of provincial life in general? Of the power of environment in determining character? What pictures of Middle-

march life do you most definitely recall, as you look backward to the book? Can you think of anything in this novel which is out of keeping with its general atmosphere?

How far are you reminded of George Eliot's own personality in the account of Dorothea's girlhood? Does Dorothea's theory of life, as she gives expression to it in the latter part of the story, correspond with what we know of George Eliot herself? How far does she sympathize with Mr. Casaubon's scholarly labors? Does she betray sympathy or antipathy for any particular character or groups of characters, or would you say that her delineation was perfectly impartial? What evidence is there in this book of her own revolt against evangelicalism? Comparing *Middlemarch* with her earlier novels, are you conscious of any change in her philosophical attitude? Does the book show any evidence of the author's artistic instinct and purely scientific interest working at cross purposes? In what features of the book is George Eliot's power of imagination most clearly manifested? Comparing it with her earlier novels, do you discover any evidence of flagging energy?

Considering the book from the standpoint of style, do you find anything awkward or cumbersome in it? Why does the theme need, for its adequate treatment, a large canvas? Are any of the minor characters drawn with too much detail? Is there any violation of the principles of good narrative style? What characteristics of the author's writing do you think most admirable? Indicate passages that betray through their vocabulary George Eliot's scientific knowledge. What do you think of her fondness for moral reflec-

tions? What aphorisms in the book seem to you most striking? Does the style impress you as being self-conscious? Point out passages where the author, not satisfied with direct delineation of action, tries to make the action doubly plain by the addition of analysis and comment. To what extent does irony appear as an element of style? Do you think the style is always in harmony with the subject-matter?

Summing up the book, does it on the whole give weight to the belief, inculcated elsewhere by George Eliot, that "character is fate"? That ordinary causes are more significant, in the conduct of life, than extraordinary causes? How would you express, in the fewest possible words, what you conceive to be the "moral" of the story?

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